

# SCO E Employee Handbook

Sonoma County Office of Education



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## Welcome

Employees of the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) play a vital role in ensuring the ongoing success of public education in our community. To new employees, welcome to the County Office! An interesting and challenging experience awaits you as a member of the Sonoma County Office of Education staff. You join over 500 other employees who are contributing to our organizational mission of fostering student success through service to students, schools, and the community.

This Employee Handbook has been designed to introduce you to our organization, familiarize you with the guidelines and benefits that impact your employment, and answer some of the questions you may have concerning the County Office and its personnel practices. The employment policies of the Sonoma County Office of Education have been developed specifically with the intent of:

- Ensuring high standards in all programs and services;
- Maintaining and developing the professionalism and skill of the staff;
- Reflecting our commitment to fair and equitable treatment of all employees;
- Meeting legal mandates that apply to employment rights and responsibilities.

While this Handbook is intended to provide you with a general overview of our employment policies, it does not present a complete description of your employment relationship and should not be read or treated as an employment contract. Where possible, the Handbook guides you to the document, person, or department where you can get more detailed information on specified subjects.

Over time, changing circumstances will require that the policies and benefits outlined in this Handbook be updated, revised, or altered. As you consult the Handbook for information in the months ahead, remember that it may be necessary for you to verify that all applicable information is still current.

Other documents that contain information related to your employment include the Policies and Procedures Manual, Merit System rules and regulations (for classified employees), and applicable collective bargaining agreements. The SCOE Employee Center of our website—accessed from the link in the upper-right corner of [www.scoe.org](http://www.scoe.org)—contains these documents and other helpful information. In all instances, current policy statements and negotiated contracts take precedence over the information included in this Employee Handbook.

—January 2011

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# Introduction

## What the County Office of Education Does

The citizens of California, through the state constitution and state legislature, have created a three-level public education system. There are 58 county offices of education in California that form the “intermediate level” of this system, providing a critical link between the California Department of Education (CDE) and local school districts. The state legislature and the CDE set the general direction, goals, and laws of education in California, while the day-to-day delivery of educational services—all the teaching and learning—takes place in local school districts. Linking these two levels of the system are the county offices of education.

### **SONOMA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

#### **County Superintendent**

Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D.

#### **County Board of Education**

Alex Bantis  
Karen Bosworth  
Pat Hummel  
Jill Kaufman  
Helga Lemke  
Ray Peterson  
Kathleen Willbanks

Regular meetings of the Sonoma County Board of Education are held on the first Thursday of each month at 4:00 P.M. in the Board Room of the Sonoma County Office of Education. Meetings are open to the public. ♦

Like other county offices, the Sonoma County Office of Education accomplishes its mission by offering a centralized system of services. These services are designed to provide information and assistance so that our county’s schools can meet educational goals, comply with legal mandates, and operate efficiently. At the same time, the County Office serves as a voice for the community, informing the CDE of educational issues, needs, and innovations in our county.

The public served by our office voices its education priorities through the election of the Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools, who is the chief administrative officer of our agency. The seven-member County Board of Education, an elected body with specific responsibilities related to the operation of SCOE programs, provides educational and fiduciary stewardship for county voters and their communities. The County Office operates with an annual budget of approximately \$75 million, with funding provided by the state, local tax revenues, and the federal government.

The programs and services of the County Office are numerous and diverse. In some instances, they have been created specifically to comply with guidelines set by CDE. In other cases, they have come into being because a centralized

service that is accessible to all schools is the most cost-efficient way to meet educational or operational demands. Still other programs and services have been developed in response to the unique educational needs of a particular segment of the county’s student population.

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# Department Overview

## Academic Support, Assessment, and Accountability

The Academic Support, Assessment, and Accountability department helps schools deliver educational programs that meet high academic standards and provides support for teaching and learning that results in improved student achievement. Each year, the department sponsors hundreds of workshops for local educators, conducts individual school site consultations, and provides access to instructional resources. To meet its objectives, this department is organized into the following units:

- *AVID North Coast Regional Center*—AVID, an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination, is a research-based program that identifies, recruits, and prepares students for four-year college eligibility. This regional center assists middle and high schools implement AVID programs, which provide students with an academic elective class that emphasizes writing as a tool of learning, use of the inquiry method, collaboration, and reading.
- *Curriculum Services*—Schools and districts can receive subject-specific professional development in mathematics, reading/language arts, and science. The focus of these services is effective implementation of the state frameworks and ensuring that all students meet or exceed grade-level standards.
- *English Learner (EL) Services*—EL Services provides a full spectrum of support to promote the achievement of students learning English as a second language. The program hosts instructional strategy workshops, offers site-based academic language academies, and encourages teachers to collaborate to improve EL instruction. Several training options for teachers seeking certification to provide instruction to English Learners are also available.
- *Leadership Assistance*—Effective school leadership is key to raising student achievement and leadership development focused on schoolwide improvement is a priority in many local districts. Our Leadership Assistance Center provides professional development for administrators and teacher-leaders, one-on-one coaching for principals, and school leadership support and consultation.
- *Library Services*—The County Office has library resources available for local school use and provides programs to help schools develop effective school library programs. The SCOE Library collection includes over 40,000 books, videos, and other items. Library staff maintain this collection and are available to assist in selecting instructional resources for school sites.

### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Sonoma County Office of Education's mission is to foster student success through service to students, schools, and the community. ♦

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- *School Readiness/Preschool*—Recognizing that student achievement begins before a student enters kindergarten, the County Office recently expanded its school readiness initiatives. Professional development and coaching for preschool teachers and classroom aides are provided, as well as incentive programs for aspiring preschool teachers. Staff are also working to facilitate articulation between preschool and kindergarten.
  - *Sonoma County Achievement Team (SoCAT)*—This team is comprised of credentialed specialists with a wide range of content and program expertise who provide direct assistance and support to schools and districts that have made academic achievement at the district, school, and student subgroup levels a high priority.
  - *Technology Services*—Technology Services staff provide training, technical support, and consultation for the use of technology resources to actively engage students in the learning process. Training and support for schools that are using data-based decision-making to address student needs and raise achievement levels is also provided.

## **Business Services**

- *Fiscal Services*—The Fiscal Services department accounts for all K-12 public education funding in Sonoma County. It is divided into two primary units: Internal Fiscal Services, which supports the financial operations of the County Office of Education, and External Fiscal Services, which supports all 40 of Sonoma County's school districts as well as the local community college. Services provided include budget support, accounting, payroll, retirement accounting, accounts receivable, and accounts payable.
- *Information Technology*—Information Technology provides districts and the Sonoma County Office of Education with the data processing tools, resources, and training to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities. This department produces payroll checks, vendor payments, and financial reports for all public schools in Sonoma County and provides technical support for SCOE's use of technology.
- *Operations*—This department supports the general operations of the County Office of Education and provides operational support to schools. The department oversees SCOE's printing and office services, directs maintenance and repair operations, and manages the vehicle pool. Coordinated services to districts in areas such as bulk purchases of supplies and service contracts for equipment are also under the direction of this department.

## **Career Development/Workforce Preparation**

This department offers Career Technical Education (CTE) courses for high school students through its Regional Occupational Program, supports the development of high school career pathways across Sonoma County, facilitates the countywide Work-Ready Certification

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program, assists schools with vocational counseling and job placement services, enhances career exploration efforts in middle school, and connects schools to local workforce development efforts.

- *Regional Occupational Program*—Each year, the Regional Occupational Program (ROP) provides nearly 4,000 high school juniors and seniors with career and technical skills training. ROP classes are offered on each high school campus in the county and students enroll in courses as high school electives. The career and technical contents of ROP instruction is determined through job market surveys, industry requests, and local school district interest.
- *Vocational and Skills Training at Correctional Facilities*—Working in cooperation with the Sonoma County Sheriff, the department provides educational services to adults incarcerated in local correctional facilities. With an eye toward increasing each individual’s future employment options, the program works to improve basic reading, writing, and math skills; provide vocational training; and support the acquisition of General Educational Development (GED) and/or California High School Equivalency certificates.
- *Work-Ready Certification*—Work-Ready Certification is a program designed to verify that students have the entry-level workplace skills that Sonoma County employers require. Student skills are “tested” by employer representatives and certificates are awarded only to those students who they determine are work-ready.

## **Human Resources**

The Human Resources department manages all facets of the Sonoma County Office of Education’s personnel procedures and serves as a professional resource for schools regarding employment issues.

- *Beginning Teacher Project*—The North Coast Beginning Teacher Program (NCBTP) provides support to new teachers and individuals seeking to become teachers by administering three state-approved and state-funded credential programs leading to beginning teacher success. It is a regional consortium comprised of multiple county offices of education, universities, and school districts. Sonoma County Office of Education employees are eligible to participate in the Beginning Teacher programs that meet their credential requirements.
- *Credentials*—This unit is responsible for registering the credentials of all teachers and administrators in Sonoma County, including substitute teachers. Staff advise applicants on credentialing requirements, review and process credential applications, issue temporary certificates, and provide information and assistance in interpreting regulations related to certificated assignments. The unit monitors school staff assignments throughout the county to ensure that all administrators and teachers are appropriately credentialed,

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licensed, and/or certified and that teaching assistants are tested for competency in accordance with state regulations. A substitute teacher consortium, staffed by this unit, verifies that all substitute teachers in the county meet the requirements to serve as substitutes. Biweekly substitute orientations are provided to facilitate completion of the required paperwork.

- *Employee Benefits*—This unit administers and manages leaves and benefits for County Office of Education personnel.
- *Fingerprint Services*—Current law requires that all school districts obtain Department of Justice fingerprint clearance for all new employees. To assist districts in meeting this requirement in a timely manner, the department operates a LiveScan Fingerprint Service which enables fingerprint impressions to be transmitted to the Department of Justice or Federal Bureau of Investigation electronically.
- *Human Resources Administration*—Administrative services provided for County Office programs include activities such as tracking position vacancies, filling vacancies through promotional and open recruitment, distributing and processing employment applications, organizing interviews, processing employee pay and status changes, and monitoring performance evaluations.
- *Substitute Assignment*—The department also coordinates the recruitment, orientation, and placement of substitute employees in County Office classrooms. Substitutes are assigned to fill teacher and assistant positions when absences occur.

## **SELPA, Special Education Local Plan Area**

SELPA is a state-mandated association that oversees and facilitates educational services for students with disabilities. The SELPA office for Sonoma County is located at the County Office of Education and its operations are cooperatively governed by the County Superintendent of Schools and district superintendents. SELPA's role is to ensure that the specialized needs of each disabled student in Sonoma County are appropriately met.

- *Adaptive Technology Center*—SELPA's Adaptive Technology Center provides special education students with specialized technology resources that can help them access education and participate in school and community activities.
- *Infant Program*—Infants and toddlers with vision, hearing, or orthopedic impairments and their families can receive early intervention services in a coordinated, family-centered manner thanks to this SELPA program. Services include: assessment; home intervention; speech, physical, and occupational therapy; parent support and training; transportation; and assistive technology.

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- *Medi-Cal Billing*—School districts in the North Bay counties have formed a consortium for the collection of federal Medi-Cal funding for eligible students who are served in special education programs across the county. The Sonoma County SELPA serves as the lead agency for this consortium.
  - *Program Specialists*—Program specialists offer training and support covering a wide range of topics, including full inclusion, autism spectrum disorders, alternative dispute resolution, positive behavior support, IDEA implementation, interagency coordination, early intervention, legal compliance, and student assessment.

## Special Education

Special Education offers a variety of specialized instructional services for children who have physical, emotional, or mental disabilities. This department operates classes for some of the county's most severely disabled students and offers support services at district schools.

- *Designated Instructional Services*—Designated Instructional Services (DIS) are provided to students in district and SCOE special education classrooms. These services currently include a deaf/hard of hearing resource program at Santa Rosa High School and itinerant services for students with hearing and vision impairments. Services may be provided as “pull out” activities, where students are taken out of their classroom for specialized support during the school day, or they may be direct assistance provided within the context of the classroom.
- *Non-Public Schools/Licensed Children's Institutions*—This unit administers and funds education services for students who are wards or dependents of the court and who are residing outside of their parental home. Students who receive services are placed in non-public schools/licensed children's institutions.
- *Preschool Program*—The Preschool Program serves special education eligible children, ages 3-5 years, on behalf of Sonoma County districts. Services include special day classes and specialty programs for children with autism, orthopedic challenges, or emotional problems. Intake and assessment services are provided by a team that includes psychologists, speech therapists, and early intervention teachers.
- *Sonoma Developmental Center Programs*—The Sonoma Developmental Center contracts with the Sonoma County Office of Education to provide individualized programs in group settings for its residents, each of whom has severe multiple disabilities. Nearly 300 adults and a small group of children are provided with specialized instruction designed to develop their ability to live with independence, make choices, and have meaningful work and leisure options.
- *Special Day Classes*—On behalf of local school districts, the Special Education department operates a variety of special day classes for severely disabled students, ages 6 to 22 years,

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who have physical, emotional, or mental disabilities. Over 430 special education students are served each day in SCOE classrooms. The program is administered regionally in an effort to locate these specialized classes as close to the students' home schools as possible.

## **Youth Development, Support, and Leadership**

The Youth Development, Support, and Leadership department operates alternative schools for students who are seriously at risk of school and/or societal failure, provides ongoing academic instruction for incarcerated youth and juvenile wards of the court, offers home school and independent study alternatives, and provides resources to assist schools in addressing the issues that put children at risk in today's world.

- *Alternative Education*—The Alternative Education unit provides daily instruction to over 300 students enrolled in the Community School, Court School, and Home Study programs. Community School classrooms each serve 18 to 25 students in grades 7 through 12. The schools provide a different kind of learning environment for students who are experiencing difficulties in a traditional school setting or who are exhibiting negative behavior patterns in school or the community. Many of the students have been expelled from their district school, identified as habitually truant, or placed on probation by the juvenile court. Community Schools also offer independent study and clean and sober classrooms. Court Schools provide instruction for school-age children and youth residing in court-supervised programs, such as Juvenile Hall, Probation Camp, Sierra Youth Center, and the Valley of the Moon Children's Home. Home Study is a K-12 public education program for families that choose home-schooling as a means of meeting the academic needs of their children.
- *Cal-SAFE (California School Age Families Education)*—The Adera Cal-SAFE Program provides education and support services so that pregnant and parenting teens can continue their education at a comprehensive or alternative high school. The program also provides childcare and related services to assist teen parents in graduating from high school.
- *Safe Schools*—The Safe Schools unit helps schools and communities develop school-based and school-linked prevention and intervention services for students. The unit coordinates initiatives related to child welfare and attendance, truancy prevention, gang suppression, school violence reduction and crisis response, substance abuse prevention, HIV prevention education, and homeless education assistance. The unit also handles expulsion and interdistrict attendance appeals submitted to the Sonoma County Board of Education.

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# History of the County Office

Like other county offices in California, the history of the Sonoma County Office of Education has been driven largely by the changing educational needs of a growing population base. As the state’s population has grown, so too has its need to add structure to the education system to meet the new demands of numbers. Today’s education system has evolved over time—and it continues to evolve—in response to the needs and expectations of California’s citizenry.

Sonoma County has also changed dramatically over the years. Once completely rural, today’s landscape retains its rural feel in places, but many of the hills and valleys are now home to growing numbers of residents. Records indicate that the number of students enrolled in public schools in 1852 totaled 230; today that number exceeds 70,000. How educational services are delivered to this changing student population has required innovations in teaching; how the whole system is organized to function efficiently on a larger scale has led to the establishment and growth of the County Office.

The role of County Superintendent was initially defined in 1852 by the state legislature as an add-on function to the office of county assessor. From 1852 to 1880, the chief fiscal officer in Sonoma County was officially titled “Assessor and Superintendent of Schools.” The sole educational function of the job in 1852 was to oversee the apportionment of state funds to local school districts. In 1860, the Assessor/ Superintendent was also given the responsibility of testing and certifying the qualifications of teachers.

The County Superintendent became an elected position in 1879 when a bill was passed taking school duties away from the assessor and mandating county superintendency elections every four years. Elected county superintendents were given new duties to match their new status, most of them having to do with oversight of district operations and reporting requirements to the state. Other responsibilities were added gradually by the state legislature—in 1912, 1915, 1921, 1931 and so on—and the office of the county superintendent began to grow from a “one horse agency” to a small organization of education professionals supported by an expert clerical staff. By 1947, the county superintendent had assumed 22 functions, including curriculum supervision, emergency teacher credentialing, health and nursing services for

**ELECTED COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS OF SONOMA COUNTY**

Charles S. Smyth, 1880-86  
Mrs. F. McG. Martin, 1887-94  
E.W. Davis, 1895-98  
Minnie Coulter, 1899-1906  
DeWitt Montgomery, 1907-10  
Florence Barnes, 1911-18  
Ben Ballard, 1919-22  
Louise Clark, 1923-26  
O.F. Stanton, 1927-31  
Edwin Kent, 1932-41  
Charles W. Wiggins, 1942-54  
DeForest Hamilton, 1955-68  
Walter A. Eagan, 1968-86  
Dick Bacon, 1986-87  
Marv Adams, 1988-94  
Tom Crawford, 1995-2002  
Carl Wong, Ed.D., 2003-2010  
Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D., 2011-present ♦

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districts, coordination of educational resources, attendance monitoring, and funding apportionments.

Sonoma County saw one of its most dramatic periods of growth after World War II, followed by the greatest number of new school openings—48 in the 1950s—in the county's history. In response to this growth, the County Office began to see its own flurry of development. The elected County Board of Education was officially established in 1956, engaging community representatives in the stewardship of countywide educational activities. In 1964, a very significant structural change occurred when it was mandated by the state that county offices of education become independent from county government. A June 9, 1964 resolution by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors transferred all educational duties, functions, and budgets to the newly-established Sonoma County Office of Education, a freestanding institution. The County Office retains this independent structure today; it is not part of the county or state government systems.

In recent decades, the responsibilities of the County Superintendent have continued to grow. In 1966, our Regional Occupational Program was initiated to help the county's high school students prepare for future employment; Sonoma County's first Community School opened in the mid-1980s; a 1992 state law designed to help ensure the financial solvency of schools has required county offices to carefully monitor district finances and added new responsibilities to the County Office's Business Services department.

As more programs and services were established, the County Office staff changed to accommodate new needs. The County Office employed 60 individuals in 1956, 367 in 1985, and over 600 in 2000, dropping to 500 in 2011. Today, the Sonoma County Office of Education operates under the direction of Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D., who became Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools on January 3, 2011.

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# Employment Policies

## Equal Employment Opportunity and Nonharassment

The Sonoma County Office of Education is an equal opportunity employer. This means that employment decisions are based on merit and business needs, and not on gender, color, race, ancestry, creed, religion, national origin, age, handicap or disability, medical condition, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, citizenship status, or any other factor rendered unlawful by federal, state, or local law. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including but not limited to hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leave of absence, compensation, and training.

Further, it is the expectation of the Sonoma County Office of Education that employees not discriminate against each other or non-employees based on the above-mentioned factors.

The County Office also supports the goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in hiring, accommodating, promoting, and retaining qualified employees with disabilities. All employees are expected to help implement the goals of the ADA.

**Nonharassment**—The Sonoma County Office of Education is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, the County Office expressly prohibits any form of unlawful employee harassment. Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based upon a person's gender, color, race, ancestry, creed, religion, national origin, age, handicap or disability, medical condition, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, citizenship status, or other protected group status. All such harassment is unlawful.

Sexual harassment deserves special mention. It is the policy of the County Office to provide an education, employment, and business environment free of sexual harassment as defined by state and federal mandates. The County Office expressly prohibits unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, especially where:

- Submission is made either explicitly or implicitly a condition of employment;
- Submission is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting an individual;
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Offensive comments, jokes, innuendos, and other sexually oriented statements are also prohibited.

All County Office employees are responsible for helping to ensure that the work environment is free from harassment. If you feel that you have experienced or witnessed harassment,

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you should immediately notify your supervisor, an assistant superintendent, the County Superintendent, or any other supervisory employee. Your complaint will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. The County Office forbids retaliation against anyone who has reported harassment.

The County Office will investigate all harassment complaints thoroughly and promptly. If the County Office determines that an employee is guilty of harassing another employee, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the offending employee.

**Uniform Complaints**—A uniform complaint is a written statement alleging discrimination, harassment, or violation of a federal or state law. There are specific legal guidelines about what constitutes a uniform complaint, how such complaints are filed, timelines, resolution procedures, and appeals. This information is outlined in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

Employees may submit uniform complaints in writing to the compliance officer for the County Office, Jeffrey Heller, Human Resources Director. Complaints must be submitted within six months of the alleged incident. All uniform complaints will be investigated as required by law and a written decision will be issued within 60 days.

Not all complaints fall under the scope of the uniform complaint process. Procedures for submitting other types of complaints are also outlined in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

## **Medical Examinations and Criminal History Review**

As part of the County Office's employment procedures, an applicant may be required to obtain a post-offer/pre-employment health examination by a medical practitioner to determine whether the applicant is capable of performing the responsibilities of a specified position. Any offer of employment that an applicant receives from the County Office is contingent upon, among other things, satisfactory completion of required health examinations.

The County Office may require post-offer/pre-employment health examinations for any open position provided the requirements are included in the announcement of the opening.

**Tuberculin testing**—To prevent the spread of tuberculosis in the education environment, each employee of the County Office must submit evidence of freedom from active tuberculin infection prior to employment and every four years thereafter. Tuberculin tests, including intradermal skin tests and (when necessary) chest x-rays, are provided by the County Office at no expense to employees. The Human Resources department notifies employees when testing is scheduled.

**Fingerprinting**—As a means of ensuring that no member of the staff has been convicted of a narcotics crime, sex crime, or other offense which would preclude their employment

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by an educational institution, the County Office requires that employees be fingerprinted. All employees must be fingerprinted and receive clearance from the state Department of Justice prior to the first day of employment. The Sonoma County Office of Education has a fingerprint service at the main office where fingerprints are taken and submitted for clearance. The processing fee is paid by the County Office.

The County Office reserves the right to determine if a conviction would make a candidate unsuitable for employment.

Questions about post-offer/pre-employment health examinations, tuberculin testing, or fingerprinting may be directed to the Human Resources department.

### **Orientation for New Employees**

During your first few days of employment, you will participate in an orientation program conducted by the Human Resources department and various members of your department, including your supervisor.

The first phase of this orientation will be the traditional Human Resources department briefing that provides you with essential information regarding the County Office and your new position, compensation, benefit programs, and other job-related matters and requirements. You will be asked to complete all necessary paperwork at this time, such as medical benefit plan enrollment forms, beneficiary designation forms, and tax forms. At this time, you will be required to present information establishing your identity and your eligibility to work in the United States in accordance with applicable federal law.

The second phase of your orientation will be conducted by the department director and/or department staff in your newly assigned area. Here, specific job responsibilities will be reviewed and co-workers who can provide day-to-day support will be introduced.

The County Office's orientation program is designed to familiarize you with the agency's structure, goals, clients, and services; provide you with a clear understanding of your job responsibilities and your supervisor's expectations; and give you a comfortable footing on which to begin your new employment relationship.

### **Probationary Period**

You have been hired with the hope and expectation that your employment at the County Office will be long-term and satisfying. The initial period of employment, often called a probationary period, provides an opportunity for you and the County Office to get acquainted with each other and assess the ongoing viability of the employment relationship. During this initial period of employment, your supervisor will meet with you to discuss your performance and to provide you with written evaluations. In turn, you are encouraged to provide your supervisor with your views about continuing in your assigned position.

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As specified in collective bargaining agreements and Merit Rules, employees of the County Office serve in a probationary status upon initial employment and upon promotion to any position which is at a higher classification than previous positions. Probationary periods vary in length depending on the type of position and/or the terms specified in collective bargaining agreements. Certificated management staff and Regional Occupational Program teachers are employed on a contract basis and do not have a formal probationary period.

If you are a member of a collective bargaining unit, please consult your contract or the Merit Rules for specific information about the length of your probationary period. Unrepresented employees may contact their supervisor or the Human Resources department.

### **Performance Appraisal**

To ensure that you perform your job to the best of your abilities, it is important that you be recognized for good performance and that you receive appropriate suggestions for improvement when necessary. Consistent with this goal, your performance will be evaluated by your supervisor on an ongoing basis and you will receive periodic written evaluations.

All written evaluations will be based on your overall performance in relation to your job responsibilities and will also take into account your conduct, demeanor, and record of attendance. Our appraisal system is designed as a two-way communication process: you have an opportunity to discuss your major accomplishments and your supervisor can offer suggestions and direction for desired performance and professional growth. The County Office encourages you to work with your supervisor to develop an individualized performance plan and to mutually establish performance goals for the future.

Employees are normally evaluated once per year at their anniversary date, in the final months of the school year, or at a set time of year (for example, teaching assistants are evaluated in February/March). Teachers who have been employed by the County Office for more than three years and employees in the SEIU bargaining unit with five or more satisfactory evaluations in the same classification may be evaluated every other year. To learn the specific date and frequency of your performance appraisal, contact your supervisor or the Human Resources department. The Policies and Procedures Manual contains comprehensive information about the appraisal process, as do all of the collective bargaining agreements. You may obtain a copy of the form that will be used in your evaluation from your supervisor or the Human Resources department.

In addition to the regular performance appraisals described above, special written evaluations may be conducted by your supervisor at any time to advise you of the existence of performance problems. All written evaluations become part of your employee file maintained by Human Resources.

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# Compensation

## Work Hours

The County Office maintains an official 40-hour work week. The regular work day for employees at the main Skylane facility and other office sites is from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. For employees working in classrooms, schedules are arranged by program supervisors and may vary. Employees working an eight-hour day are entitled to two 15-minute rest breaks, scheduled as close to the middle of each 4-hour shift as possible, and a 30- to 60-minute unpaid meal period, normally taken between 11:30 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. The scheduling of breaks is collaboratively arranged by you and your supervisor. If you are a part-time employee, your work hours and schedule will be arranged by your supervisor.

Teachers, teaching assistants, and other staff who work directly with students have work hours that vary significantly from the standard hours of the County Office. Consult your collective bargaining agreement to verify your negotiated work hours, if applicable.

Daily and weekly work schedules may be changed from time to time at the discretion of the County Office. Changes in work schedules will adhere to the conditions specified in the Merit System and/or collective bargaining agreements, if applicable.

**Work year**—Many positions at the County Office involve direct contact with students or teachers. Employees in these positions have specified work years that correspond to student attendance. Every certificated employee receives an annual contract which specifies the days of service in their work year. Days of service for classified employees, like teaching assistants, with work years tied to student attendance are specified in collective bargaining agreements.

## Salary Schedules and Placement

To attract and retain qualified staff, the County Office endeavors to pay salaries that are competitive with those of similar educational employers and the labor market here in Sonoma County. With this in mind, general salary ranges have been established for each County Office position through a careful analysis of the work required and the responsibilities of each job. Periodically, the County Office reviews job specifications and salary schedules to ensure that they are rated appropriately. Salary schedules for positions covered by bargaining units are negotiated and clearly specified in each collective bargaining agreement.

If you are given a salary increase, it will normally be effective on your anniversary date or at the start of a new school year. Note that the official anniversary date for all teaching assistants is July 1.

Remember that your total compensation at the County Office consists not only of the salary you are paid, but also of the various benefits you are offered, such as group health and life

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insurance and your retirement plan, as described in a later section of this handbook.

Questions regarding salary schedules or your individual salary should be directed to your supervisor or the Human Resources department. Collective bargaining agreements also provide specific information about negotiated salary schedules and placement.

## Pay Procedures and Payroll Deductions

County Office employees are paid on a monthly basis, normally on the last working day of the month. There are several options available to you with regard to how you receive your monthly paycheck. You may:

- Obtain your pay via direct deposit to your bank or credit union;
- Pick up your paycheck from a designated employee in your department;
- Have your paycheck sent to you via U.S. mail.

During your orientation session, the Human Resources staff will advise you of who in your department is responsible for distributing your paycheck. Please contact that individual to arrange for the monthly pick-up or mailing of your paycheck. If you prefer to have your paycheck directly deposited to your bank or credit union, the payroll staff in Business Services can provide you with the necessary authorization form.

### CONTACT THE PAYROLL

#### STAFF IN BUSINESS TO:

- Arrange for direct deposit of your pay to your bank or credit union.
- Report errors in your paycheck.
- Report misplaced or lost warrants.

Classified staff, call 524-2637

Certificated staff, call 524-2645 ♦

Please review your paycheck for errors when it is received. If you find a mistake, report it to Business Services as soon as possible. You should also immediately report to Business Services any misplaced or lost payroll warrants. Business Services can verify that your warrant has not been cashed and issue a replacement warrant.

Upon separation from employment, you will be paid all amounts due to you in accordance with applicable law. Your final paycheck will normally be issued on the last day of the month in which your final day of County Office employment occurs. If payment on the last day of the month is not possible, payment will be made on the tenth day of the month following separation.

**Payroll deductions**—The County Office is required by law to make various deductions from your paycheck. These may include amounts for federal and state income tax, Medicare, social security, and retirement. If you have questions about these deductions, consult the payroll staff in Business Services.

In addition to the mandatory deductions, a variety of voluntary deductions can be made from your paycheck at your request, including contributions for health and life insurance, union dues, tax-sheltered annuities, savings bonds, credit union payments, and others.

Contact the payroll staff in Business Services to arrange for voluntary deductions and to obtain the necessary authorization forms. (Deductions for tax-sheltered annuities require that an account be established with an approved vendor prior to submitting any SCOE paperwork. Please see [www.403bcompare.com](http://www.403bcompare.com) and look under Sonoma County Office of Education to see the approved vendor list.)

### Overtime Procedures

If you are classified as a **nonexempt** employee, you will receive compensation for approved overtime work—that is, work you perform beyond 40 hours in a week or eight hours in a day. If you work overtime, you will be compensated by overtime pay or compensatory time-off equal to one and a half times your normal pay rate.

Any overtime you work must first be approved by your department director. Your supervisor will obtain prior approval to assign overtime work to you and, in cooperation with the department director, determine if compensation will be awarded in terms of overtime pay or compensatory time-off. Your supervisor will attempt to provide you with reasonable notice when the need for overtime work arises, however, advance notice may not always be possible.

Overtime pay, if granted, is issued separate from your regular payroll warrant. The pay period for overtime pay ends on the last day of each month and payment is issued on the 10th of the following month. You must submit a Supplemental Pay Authorization form, with proper authorizations, by the last day of the month to receive overtime pay.

Compensatory time-off, if granted, is also recorded on the Supplemental Pay Authorization. Human Resources maintains records on compensatory time-off and can acquaint you with the guidelines for recording and using earned time.

Employees who are classified as **exempt** do not receive overtime compensation as the rate of pay for these positions is considered full compensation for all time required to fulfill assigned duties.

### EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

**Exempt:** Employees who are not required to be paid overtime, in accordance with applicable federal and state wage and hour laws, for work performed beyond 40 hours in a work week or 8 hours in a work day. Executives, managers, administrators, and certificated employees are typically exempt.

**Nonexempt:** Employees who are required to be paid overtime at the rate of one and a half times their regular rate of pay for all hours worked beyond 40 hours in a work week or 8 hours in a work day, in accordance with applicable federal and state wage and hour laws.

**Certificated:** Employees such as administrators, teachers, nurses, speech therapists, and others who serve in positions which require a state credential or license. Certificated employees are employed on a yearly contract basis for a specified number of work days and are considered exempt, as defined above.

**Classified:** Employees who are not required to hold teaching and/or administrative credentials and whose terms and conditions of employment are largely determined by Merit System rules and regulations. Classified employees may be exempt or nonexempt. ♦

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Your supervisor can answer any questions you have about the County Office's overtime procedures. The Policies and Procedures Manual details the process for submitting Supplemental Pay Authorization forms.

## **Fringe Benefits**

The County Office has established a variety of employee benefit programs designed to assist you and your eligible dependents in meeting the financial burdens that can result from illness, disability, and death. Benefit programs may include, but are not necessarily limited to medical, dental, vision, and life insurance for employees and their eligible dependents; an income protection plan; and workers' compensation insurance. Detailed information on benefits is available on the SCOE website, [www.scoe.org/benefits](http://www.scoe.org/benefits).

**IF YOU ARE A MEMBER  
OF A COLLECTIVE  
BARGAINING UNIT ...**

Consult your agreement to find out what benefits are available to you and how your benefits are funded. ♦

The County Office negotiates with each collective bargaining unit concerning the payment schedule for benefits, including the level of employee and employer contribution. Note that some represented groups and all unrepresented employees are now participating in the STRS Up or PERS Up program, which gives employees compensation for salary *and* benefits in their salary base. These employees participate in the County Office's group benefit plans, but are responsible for paying most of their own benefit costs.

If you are a member of a collective bargaining unit, please consult your agreement for information about the benefits that are available to you and how your benefits are funded. If you are an unrepresented employee, the Human Resources department will provide you with applicable benefits information. Group health and life insurance programs are described in summary plan description booklets that are available from the insurance provider. Descriptions of insurance programs are contained in the County Office's master insurance contracts with insurance carriers, which are maintained by the Human Resources department.

If changes to your insurance coverage are required, please be advised that there are specified times when changes can be implemented. Some changes may take place only once a year at a time determined by the insurance carrier, while others must be made within 30 days of a qualifying event. If you change your name, address, or marital status, or if you gain or lose a dependent, please contact Human Resources as soon as possible to ensure that you maintain proper coverage. Once a year, the County Office has an open enrollment period when employees may change medical insurances or add dependents who were not previously covered.

The Human Resources department will advise you of your rights and responsibilities concerning health and insurance benefits should your eligibility change due to promotion,

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transfer, or other circumstances. In general, benefits commence on the first of the month following 30 days of employment and cease on the last day of the month of termination, with the following two exceptions: 1) teachers who work the entire school year receive health benefits through September; and 2) teaching assistants who work the entire school year receive health benefits through August.

The County Office reserves the right to amend or terminate any benefit program or to require, increase, or decrease employee premium contributions toward any benefit through negotiations with collective bargaining units.

For information regarding any benefit program, check the SCOE website. Benefit plan contact information, group plan numbers, and detailed information about all dental, medical, and vision plans are available at [www.scoe.org/benefits](http://www.scoe.org/benefits). If you don't find the information you're seeking online, contact the Human Resources department.

**Continuation of benefits**—If you retire, resign, or are terminated from the County Office's employ or if your work hours are reduced, you may have the right to retain your health insurance coverage. Continued coverage may also be available to your eligible dependents upon your death, separation, or divorce or upon termination of a child's dependent status under the County Office's health insurance programs.

Eligible employees or their dependents who choose to retain health coverage under the above-mentioned circumstances will be charged the full cost of coverage plus 2%. Those who have reduced their working hours or who have been released from employment may retain coverage for no more than 36 months. Other qualifying events allow individuals to retain coverage for a time period of between 18 months and five years, depending on the qualifying event. Coverage will end if you or your dependent fail to make timely payments for insurance premiums, secure health insurance coverage through subsequent employment or remarriage, or become eligible for Medicare benefits. Coverage may also cease if the County Office terminates its group health plan.

Human Resources will notify you of your option to continue health benefits at the time your termination occurs or your work hours are reduced. For further details regarding continuing or converting your health insurance benefits, please contact Human Resources.

**Workers' compensation**—If you experience an illness or injury arising from your employment, you may be eligible for workers' compensation. The amount of benefits payable and the duration of payment will depend upon the nature of your illness or injury. Each and every occupational illness or injury, no matter how minor, must be reported immediately to your supervisor. If you are injured on the job, please also call our Workers' Compensation early intervention nurse at 836-7457. This ensures that the County Office can assist you in obtaining appropriate coverage. Please note that your failure to follow this procedure may result in required reports not being filed in accordance with law, which may jeopardize your right to benefits.

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Questions regarding workers' compensation insurance should be directed to the Human Resources department (524-2634). Information about filing workers' compensation reports is contained in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

**Disability insurance**—If you experience an illness or injury which is not job-related or if your Workers' Compensation claim is denied, you may be eligible for salary continuation through an income protection plan. The amount of the benefits payable and the duration of payment will depend on the nature and length of your illness or injury as well as your job classification, length of time in your retirement system, and your age at the time of your disability. If you will be absent from work for more than five days due to disability, or if you have questions regarding your eligibility for disability insurance, please contact Human Resources.

### **Flexible Employee Benefit Plan**

The County Office offers employees the opportunity to participate in a Flexible Employee Benefit Plan, sometimes called an IRS 125 Flex Plan, to meet personal and family health and welfare needs. Through participation in the Flex Plan, employees may direct a portion of their salary to medical and dependent care expenses on a nontaxable basis. The Flex Plan allows the use of pre-tax dollars for otherwise after-tax, out-of-pocket expenses associated with health insurance premiums, health care costs, child care, and day care for disabled dependents. This may result in a tax savings for participating employees. Note that any dollars directed to the Flex Plan that are not used in the plan year will be forfeited.

The Human Resources department will provide you with general information about the Flexible Employee Benefit Plan during your orientation session. For more information, contact Self-Insured Schools of California (SISC) Flex, our Flex Plan administrator, at (661) 636-4710 or <http://sisc.kern/flex>.

### **State Retirement Plans**

The County Office has a retirement program to assist you in your post-employment years. Two state retirement plans are in effect for County Office employees: the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) for classified personnel and the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) for certificated personnel. As specified in California's Education Code, membership in and contributions to one of these two retirement systems is mandatory for most County Office employees. The County Office also contributes to the retirement systems on behalf of participating staff.

The Human Resources department will provide you with information about retirement plans during your orientation session. They will tell you if participation is mandatory or optional and let you know what level of employee contribution is required. A booklet describing the benefits of your retirement plan will be distributed to you at that time.

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Monthly contributions to CalPERS and CalSTRS are made for you by payroll deduction at the established rate of your total salary, exclusive of overtime. Please contact Business Services, or your retirement plan directly, if you have questions about your retirement plan. Both retirement systems have online resources, which can be accessed at [www.calpers.ca.gov](http://www.calpers.ca.gov) or [www.calstrs.com](http://www.calstrs.com).

### **Employee Assistance Program**

Through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the County Office provides employees with up to two hours of free confidential assistance in addressing personal and work-related problems that may interfere with job performance. This program is provided through Family and Community Counseling Services, a local nonprofit agency that specializes in EAP services. The agency's professional counselors can help you deal with issues such as stress, balancing work and family needs, drug or alcohol problems, marital issues that impact your work performance, depression, parent/child tensions, work-related problems, coping with death or chronic illness, physical abuse, etc. After the initial assessment meeting, EAP will make a referral for follow-up services, if needed. Consult your health plan to determine if you are covered for these follow-up services.

To encourage candid discussion with the professional counselors, EAP services are completely confidential. No information is provided to the County Office without your permission; the agency does not even release the names of employees utilizing their services.

For more information about the Employee Assistance Program or to schedule a confidential appointment, call Family and Community Counseling Services at 545-4551 and identify yourself as a Sonoma County Office of Education employee. The Human Resources department can also provide you with general information about this program.

### **Smoking Cessation Reimbursement Program**

The County Office will reimburse employees up to \$50 for successfully completing a smoking cessation program. Employees applying for this benefit must show proof of program completion and may not have received reimbursement from the Smoking Cessation Reimbursement Program within the previous twelve months. For more information about this program, contact the Business Services department at 524-2625. For referrals to smoking cessation programs, contact the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Prevention and Planning, at 565-6680.

### **Public Transportation Reimbursement Program**

The County Office maintains a Public Transportation Reimbursement Program which provides up to \$60 per month reimbursement for transportation costs to employees who ride a bicycle or public transit or carpool to work with another County Office employee at least 10 days per month. For information, contact the Business Services department at 524-2625.

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# Time-Off Benefits

## Vacations

The County Office recognizes the importance of time away from the job and wishes employees to have opportunities for rest, recreation, and other personal activities.

If you are a **certificated** employee, your time away from work—your vacation—is realized through the scheduling of work and non-work days. As the activities of certificated employees are typically tied to student attendance, extended periods of non-work days are generally scheduled during the summer months. Work schedules for certificated employees are determined by collective bargaining agreements and/or individually negotiated employment contracts. As work schedules vary significantly from employee to employee, you may wish to consult these documents for additional information about your work schedule. Please note that non-work days for certificated employees are unpaid days off from work.

If you are a **classified** employee, annual vacations provide you with time away from your job. The amount of vacation you are entitled to depends upon your status as exempt or nonexempt, the number of hours in your work week, and your length of service with the County Office. Classified employees accumulate paid vacation at rates established by Merit System rules, Superintendent Policies, and collective bargaining agreements. Consult these documents for information about vacation allowances or contact Human Resources.

Collective bargaining agreements also contain guidelines on vacations for teaching assistants, including specific usage rules and payment schedules, which differ from those for other classified employees. Depending on the needs and school calendars of the program to which a teaching assistant is assigned, vacation may be realized as scheduled days off or included in the annual pay, as summarized below.

- For teaching assistants in Community School, Preschool, and Special Education, vacation is amortized in annual pay and employees may not take vacation days off.
- For teaching assistants in Court School, vacation days may be taken when school is not in session.
- For teaching assistants in Sonoma Developmental Center/Adult Services, vacation pay is provided at the end of the year and employees do not take vacation days off.

If you are entitled to take vacation as time off, your vacation must be scheduled and approved by your supervisor in advance of being taken. Although vacation days begin accruing from the date of hire, no vacation may be taken until six months of continuous employment has been completed and your probationary period has been successfully passed. Vacation days may be carried over into successive fiscal years up to certain maximums as specified in collective bargaining agreements, Superintendent Policies, and Merit System rules.

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Vacations may be taken as weekly periods, as individual days, or in half-hour increments as long as the period chosen meets with departmental approval. In the event that a holiday observed by the County Office falls within a scheduled vacation period, you will be granted an alternate day of vacation at a later date.

Upon termination of employment, classified employees will be compensated for all accrued but unused vacation, unless your employment ends prior to the completion of your probationary period.

Questions regarding vacation and scheduled non-work days may be directed to your supervisor or the Human Resources department. Human Resources maintains ongoing records of the number of vacation days accrued by classified staff and how many days are available for use. Leave balances are also included on your monthly pay stub. Classified employees should also refer to the discussion of Attendance and Absences presented later in this handbook for information about scheduling vacations, obtaining supervisor approval, and recording days away from work.

## Holidays

The County Office recognizes the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Lincoln Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day following Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve Day
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve Day

Holidays falling on a Saturday are normally observed on the preceding Friday. Holidays falling on a Sunday are normally observed on the following Monday. You will be notified at the beginning of each school year of the actual date these holidays are observed by the County Office. The main Skylane office is closed on the days holidays are observed.

Typically, **certificated** staff have scheduled non-work days on holidays. Non-work days are unpaid days off from work.

Typically, **classified** employees receive the above-mentioned holidays, plus two additional floating holidays, as paid days off from work. Floating holidays must be scheduled and approved in advance of being taken. They are usually used in full-day increments, but may be taken in one-hour increments, and must occur in the fiscal year in which they are earned or they are forfeited. Teaching assistants follow unique policies regarding holiday leave; these employees should consult their collective bargaining agreement and/or their supervisor for further information regarding holiday provisions.

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For questions about holidays, contact your supervisor or Human Resources and consult your collective bargaining agreement. If you are a classified employee and want to schedule a floating holiday, please follow the procedure outlined in the Attendance and Absences section of this handbook.

## Sick Leave

The County Office recognizes that inability to work because of illness or injury may cause economic hardship. For this reason, we provide paid sick days to employees. Employees accrue sick days at the rate of one day per month for each month of full-time employment. Part-time employees earn sick leave on a prorated basis.

### LEAVE BALANCES

Human Resources maintains a record of the number of leave and vacation days that you accrue and use.

Leave balances are also listed on your paycheck stub. For the most current information or if you have questions about the amount of leave or vacation time you have available, call 524-2824. ♦

Eligible employees may carry over an unlimited number of unused sick days from year to year to ensure that such days are available in the event of a long-term illness. However, no employee is paid for accrued unused sick days at the time of termination. Unused sick leave of retiring employees may be applied as service credits as allowed by the applicable retirement plan.

The procedure to follow when you are absent due to illness or injury is set forth in the discussion of Attendance and Absences presented later in this Handbook. When sick leave is used, you must verify your absence upon your return to work following the established procedure. If you are off work for more than five days due to illness or injury, you must provide a doctor's release to return to work *before* returning to your worksite. The doctor's release is submitted to the Human Resources department. Human Resources staff will notify your department when you are cleared to return to work.

The County Office may require additional documentation from an employee's doctor or medical practitioner to verify sick leave absences. This documentation may be required when an employee's record shows extended chronic absenteeism, a pattern of absences, or exhaustion of earned sick leave, or in other instances deemed appropriate by the County Office.

Sick leave may be transferred from a prior employing school district or county office of education if it has been less than one year since that employment ended. During your orientation session with the Human Resources department, you can complete the necessary paperwork for this transaction.

Employees who have used all of their sick leave and are still absent due to illness or injury should contact Human Resources for information about long-term differential leave, long-term disability insurance, and other options available to ease the economic hardship caused by inability to work.

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## Other Leaves of Absence

In addition to sick leave, the County Office provides employees with other types of leave to meet the wide variety of circumstances which cause individuals to be absent from their place of employment. Types of leaves recognized by the County Office include:

- Personal necessity leave (This type of leave is not in addition to sick leave, but provides greater flexibility in using sick leave for emergency situations);
- Family care leave;
- Bereavement leave;
- Jury duty/witness leave;
- Long-term, unpaid leave of absence (including sabbaticals);
- Medical leave of absence;
- Military leave;
- Industrial injury or accident leave;
- Leave without pay.

The types of leaves granted to employees, leave duration, and specifications as to salary continuance, accrual of benefits, and eligibility are issues that are negotiated with collective bargaining units. Employees who are members of collective bargaining units should consult their current agreement for detailed information about allowable leaves; non-union employees can obtain information from their supervisor, the Human Resources department, Merit Rules, and/or the Policies and Procedures Manual.

In all instances, employees who are requesting leave should endeavor to do so in advance. The procedure for requesting leave is presented in the Attendance and Absences section on the next page. The Policies and Procedures Manual also contains detailed information about leaves. Note that you must submit an Extended Leave Request form to your supervisor in order to obtain any paid leave over 10 days and for all leave without pay. Except in cases of emergency, Extended Leave Requests must be submitted eight weeks prior to the beginning date of the leave.

**Time off for voting**—If it is impossible for you to vote in a national or state election during off-duty hours due to time constraints, you will be allowed as much as two hours of paid time off to vote. Time off for voting must be arranged with your supervisor at least two days in advance.

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## Employee Rights and Responsibilities

### Attendance and Absences

The County Office expects all employees to assume diligent responsibility for their attendance and promptness. Regular attendance at work is as important to you as it is to the County Office. Being at work as scheduled will assure you of a full paycheck each payday and will influence your opportunities for advancement. Unnecessary absences place an unfair burden on other employees and negatively affect the performance and productivity of the County Office.

The County Office recognizes that, due to illness and other compelling reasons, it may be necessary for you to be absent from work on occasion. Should you be unable to report to work as scheduled, you should notify the County Office as described below.

- **If your absence does not require substitute coverage**—Notify your supervisor, department director, or other designated department employee as soon as possible on the day of your absence. If it is impossible for you to notify the County Office of your absence, a family member or friend may do so for you. Your supervisor should be notified daily if your absence continues unless you are granted an authorized leave. In addition, you must enter your absence in the Aesop system at [www.aesoponline.com](http://www.aesoponline.com) or by calling (800) 942-3767.
- **If your absence requires substitute coverage**—Unless you work at Sonoma Development Center, you should use Aesop, our automated substitute placement service, to report absences and request substitute coverage. Access Aesop by phone at (800) 942-3767 or via the Internet at [www.aesoponline.com](http://www.aesoponline.com), then provide your ID and PIN. (Your ID is your 10-digit phone number and your PIN is the last four digits of your social security number.) If you are unable to report your absence via Aesop before 7:00 A.M. on the day of your absence, please call your supervisor or the Human Resources department (524-2730) to ensure substitute coverage.
- **If you work at Sonoma Developmental Center**—Teachers and teaching assistants at the Sonoma Developmental Center should telephone the Adult Services office at 938-6379 on the day of their absence or as far in advance as possible.

Absenteeism or tardiness that is not reported or is excessive in the judgment of the County Office is grounds for disciplinary action. Please note that if you are absent and fail to notify the County Office, we may assume you have abandoned your job.

**Requesting leave or vacation time**—The County Office has developed a formal system for employees to request and report time away from work. This system provides an explanation for employee absences and allows for accurate record-keeping of leave usage. Please report all absences via Aesop.

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Anticipated absences require prior approval. In such instances, reporting the absence via Aesop functions as both the means by which approvals are obtained and the documentation via which leave accounting takes place. Please submit absences to your supervisor as far in advance as possible when the need for leave time is anticipated. Minimum notice of five working days is required except in special or emergency situations, but advance planning is requested whenever possible.

The Policies and Procedures Manual contains detailed information about requesting leave and vacation time. Your supervisor and/or the secretary in your department can instruct you on how to use Aesop to request/reports absences. If you have questions about the amount of leave or vacation time available to you, consult your collective bargaining agreement or contact Human Resources at 524-2824.

Please note that falsification of records is grounds for disciplinary action. If an employee has not reported their absence via Aesop, the supervisor's information will serve as official record.

**Recording attendance for certificated management staff—** Because they work an individually-negotiated and nonstandard work schedule, certificated management employees may be required to complete additional record-keeping documents to account for work and non-work days. Information about these record-keeping requirements will be provided to employees, as applicable, by the Human Resources department.

## **Professional Conduct**

The effective operation of the County Office requires the services of persons with integrity, high ideals, and human understanding. As an integral member of the County Office staff, you are expected to adhere to acceptable standards of professional conduct and endeavor to provide prompt and effective service to the clients of the County Office.

Please remember that, no matter what position you hold, you are a representative of the County Office. The people with whom you come in contact will form opinions about the County Office through observation of your conduct and attitudes. You are encouraged to observe the highest standards of professionalism and demonstrate sincere respect for the rights and feelings of others at all times.

If your performance or conduct falls short of established standards, the County Office will endeavor, as appropriate, to provide you with a reasonable opportunity to correct the

### **ABSENCES THAT REQUIRE SUBSTITUTES**

Unless you work at the Sonoma Developmental Center, you must report your absence and request substitute coverage via Aesop, our automated substitute service. Access Aesop at (800) 942-3767 or **[www.aesoponline.com](http://www.aesoponline.com)**.

If you work at the Sonoma Developmental Center, contact the Adult Services office at 938-6379 on the day of your absence or as far in advance as possible. ♦

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deficiency. If, however, you fail to make the correction, you may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.

**Personal appearance and demeanor**—The County Office encourages employees to wear clothing that demonstrates their high regard for education and presents an image consistent with their job responsibilities. We recognize that different styles of dress may be appropriate for different jobs at the County Office. Whatever your job, you are expected to be appropriately attired to perform your assigned work and accommodate appropriate health and safety practices. Please use good judgment in your choice of work clothes and present yourself in a way that best represents you and the County Office. Employees are also expected to keep their work environments clean and orderly.

**Confidential information**—In the course of your work, you may have access to information about school business, students, tests, and records which should be regarded as restricted, privileged, or confidential. Except for information which has been designated for public distribution, you are expected to maintain the confidentiality of the information you have access to. Before leaving your work station for the day, please lock all files and clear all work areas of confidential materials.

Any employee who willfully releases confidential information will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Any employee who inadvertently or carelessly releases confidential information may also be subject to disciplinary action, including the denial of further access to such information and any other steps necessary to prevent further unauthorized release of information.

**Public statements**—The County Office wishes to keep the public informed about all matters related to the education of students within Sonoma County and encourages the use of the news media to communicate with the general public. Public statements on behalf of the County Office should reflect current policy and be coordinated through the County Superintendent or his designee.

You are encouraged to cooperate with the news media, but should always make it clear that you are expressing your own personal viewpoint unless you are forwarding the County Office's official position on the matters involved. Should you have questions about the appropriateness of making a public statement, please confer with your supervisor.

**Conflict of interest**—The responsibilities of the County Office necessitate that employees conduct their day-to-day activities in an ethical and responsible manner without conflict of interest in accordance with all applicable statutes, authorities, and regulations.

The Sonoma County Office of Education respects your rights to engage in activities outside of employment which are private in nature; however, you are expected to protect the County Office's interest, avoid undue outside influence on work-related decisions or activities, and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

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Your supervisor is available to review any activities which you believe might be a conflict of interest with your position at the County Office. The Policies and Procedures Manual provides some guidance regarding areas of potential conflict, such as nepotism, investments in conflict with official duties, private employment, consulting, and tutoring.

**Soliciting and selling**—In the interest of maintaining a proper business environment and preventing inconvenience to others, we ask that employees not distribute promotional, political, controversial, and other non-instructional materials or solicit other employees unless approved by the County Superintendent. Non-employees are likewise discouraged from distributing material or soliciting employees on County Office premises.

### **Communication and Problem-Solving**

On occasion, you may have a complaint, suggestion, observation, or question about your job. The County Office wishes to encourage employee communication and to consider both your ideas and your complaints. Please share any suggestions you have about how our operations could be improved.

Misunderstandings or conflicts can arise in any organization and good communication goes a long way toward resolving such issues before they become problems. To ensure effective working relations, it is important that such matters be resolved before serious problems develop. Many incidents will resolve themselves naturally; however, should a situation persist that you believe is detrimental to you or the County Office, you should follow the procedure described here to bring your complaint to management's attention.

First, discuss the problem with your immediate supervisor. If your problem is not resolved after discussion with your supervisor or if you feel a discussion with your supervisor is inappropriate, you are encouraged to request a meeting with your department director. In an effort to resolve the problem, the department director will consider the facts, conduct an investigation, and review the matter with other staff as appropriate. You may request that a coworker or union representative, if applicable, be present at any stage of this procedure.

If you are not satisfied with your department director's decision and wish to pursue the problem or complaint further, you may prepare a written summary of your concerns and request that the matter be reviewed by the County Superintendent or designee.

The County Office does not tolerate any form of retaliation against employees availing themselves of this procedure. This procedure should not be construed, however, as preventing, limiting, or delaying the County Office from taking disciplinary action against any individual in circumstances where disciplinary action is appropriate.

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## Professional Growth

A knowledgeable, well-informed, and skilled employee contributes greatly to the success of the County Office. With prior approval, employees are encouraged to participate actively in conferences, workshops, training activities, and courses that will enable them to improve their competencies in job-related skills.

As part of your performance appraisal, you and your supervisor may develop a performance plan that includes specific goals for professional growth. Participation in activities that are part of your professional growth plan, or that you would like to independently propose, require specific prior approval by your supervisor and department director. Written proposals should be submitted to your supervisor to gain approval. If approved, employees may receive release time from work with pay, reimbursement for travel, enrollment fees, and/or reimbursement for supplies. Terms of agreement are based on the needs of the agency, the benefits of the program, the potential for individual growth, and budget considerations.

Out-of-county professional growth activities require the submission of a Conference Attendance Request form and approval by the County Superintendent.

Inservice training and cross-training opportunities are also available for employees wishing to broaden their skills. Your supervisor can assist you in finding out about the variety of professional growth opportunities available to you.

## Maintaining Licenses and Credentials

Many County Office positions require that employees hold specific credentials, certificates of competency, or licenses. Teaching credentials, administrative credentials, nurse services credentials, and driver's licenses are examples of such required certifications.

If you are employed in a position that requires licenses and/or credentials, you are personally responsible for keeping them current. Each license or credential actively used or required by your job description must be registered with the County Office. *The County Office may withhold your pay if you fail to register and maintain all required licenses and credentials.*

The Human Resources department employs credentials technicians to assist certificated staff with procedures and questions. They can be reached at 524-2681.

## Personnel Records

The County Office maintains personnel files on each employee. These files contain documentation regarding all aspects of employee tenure with the County Office, such as performance appraisals, beneficiary designation forms, disciplinary notices, and letters of commendation.

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**Keeping personnel records up-to-date**—Keeping your employment record correct and up-to-date is very important. The Human Resources department should be notified promptly of any changes in your name, home address or telephone number, marital status, number of dependents, name of beneficiary, dependents listed for insurance purposes, scholastic achievements, individuals to notify in case of emergency, and so forth.

**Reviewing personnel records**—Employees may inspect their personnel record, upon request, by contacting the Human Resources department. Human Resources will arrange a convenient time for you to view your file when a member of their staff can be present.

You will be notified in writing by your supervisor or department director if derogatory material is being placed in your personnel record. Upon notification, you will have the opportunity to review and comment on the contents of the material.

Further information about placing and reviewing material in personnel files can be found in the Policies and Procedures Manual and in collective bargaining agreements. Your supervisor, the Human Resources department, or your union representative can answer any questions you may have about personnel records.

## **Reimbursable Expenses**

With prior approval, the County Office will reimburse ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by you in the performance of your job. It is the practice of the County Office to reimburse actual “out-of-pocket” expenses incurred as a result of attending authorized meetings, conferences, and conventions and performing other official duties. Information about current, established allowances for mileage, meals, parking, and lodging are specified in collective bargaining agreements or may be obtained from your supervisor.

A Conference and Travel Expense Claim form must be submitted to your department director by the tenth of the month for expenses incurred in the previous month. All receipts must be attached to the Claim. It is recommended that you keep a copy of the Claim and attachments. Reimbursement will typically be received within 15 days.

Employees may apply for a travel advance to help defray anticipated expenses when traveling on official County Office business. As specified in collective bargaining agreements, certain employees may be eligible for prepayment of reimbursable expenses.

Please note that any employee traveling outside of the county for official County Office business must submit an Absence Report form and obtain the required authorization

### **KEEP YOUR PERSONNEL RECORDS UP-TO-DATE**

Notify Human Resources of any changes in your name, home address, home telephone number, marital status, beneficiaries, or number of dependents.

Human Resources should be notified of any changes within 30 days. ♦

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signatures prior to embarking on travel. This accounting system for out-of-county travel has been developed to protect employee liability in case of accident and to ensure that the County Office can contact a traveling employee should the need arise.

Specific information about travel advances, expense claims, and out-of-county travel approval can be found in the Policies and Procedures Manual. Please consult your supervisor if you have any questions about reimbursable expenses.

## **Termination of Employment**

Employees desiring to terminate their employment relationship are urged to notify the County Office at least two weeks in advance of their intended resignation. Such notice should be given in writing to your immediate supervisor, then forwarded to your department director and the Human Resources department prior to gaining final approval from the County Superintendent. Proper notice generally allows the County Office sufficient time to calculate all monies to which you may be entitled and to include such monies in your final paycheck.

The County Office generally discourages certificated employees from resigning during the school year for which they have been contracted. However, release from contract may, in some instances, be granted.

Employees who plan to retire from County Office employment are urged to provide a minimum of two months notice. Proper notice ensures that any retirement benefits to which an employee is entitled commence in a timely manner.

Although the County Office hopes that all employment relationships are long-term and mutually rewarding, the County Office reserves the right to terminate an employment relationship during the probationary period without cause and after the probationary period for cause as specified in applicable collective bargaining agreements, Merit System rules and regulations, and/or management contracts.

Exit interviews are normally scheduled for outgoing employees and will include meetings with your supervisor or department director, Human Resources department staff, and other persons as applicable. The purpose of these interviews is to review your eligibility for benefit continuation and conversion, ensure that all necessary forms are completed, collect all County Office property that may be in your possession (e.g., keys, access cards, and equipment), and provide you with an opportunity to discuss your job-related experiences.

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# Health and Safety

## Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Free Workplace

It is the policy of the County Office to maintain a drug and alcohol free workplace in keeping with the spirit and intent of the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988. The use of controlled substances is inconsistent with the behavior expected of employees, subjects all employees and visitors to unacceptable safety risks, and undermines our ability to operate effectively and efficiently.

In this connection, please be advised that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of controlled substances in the workplace is prohibited. If you violate this prohibition, you will be subject to criminal prosecution and/or disciplinary action in accordance with collective bargaining agreements, County Office policy, the California Education Code, and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

As a condition of employment, all employees are required to abide by the County Office's policy of maintaining a drug, alcohol, and tobacco free workplace. The term "workplace" includes all premises where the activities of the County Office are conducted and in all places and all vehicles where you or any other employee are performing assigned duties.

Employees who feel they have a substance use/abuse problem are urged to voluntarily seek confidential assistance through the Employee Assistance Program or rehabilitation programs. To access the services provided by our Employee Assistance Program, call 545-4551.

In the event that you are convicted of any criminal drug statute violation occurring in the workplace (including a plea of *nolo contendere*, i.e., no contest), you must notify the County Office within five days of conviction.

Employees who violate any aspect of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. At its discretion, the County Office may require employees who violate this policy to successfully complete a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program as a condition of continued employment.

**Tobacco-free environment**—Smoking and tobacco use is prohibited in all facilities owned and/or operated by the County Office, whether indoors or out-of-doors, and in all County Office vehicles, whether on County Office property or off the premises. Please see page 20 of this Handbook for information on reimbursement for employees participating in smoking cessation programs.

## Minimizing Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens

It is the policy of the County Office to meet federal and state standards for minimizing the risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens and other potentially infectious materials in the

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workplace. Employees who may be at risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens primarily include those individuals who provide direct care to students. During your orientation briefing, the Human Resources department will tell you if your job classification is considered one at risk of exposure. Upon employment at the County Office, all employees are provided with information about bloodborne pathogens exposure control and required to view a training video.

Hepatitis B vaccinations are provided at no cost to employees who are at risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens and to other employees who request the vaccination. Information about obtaining the Hepatitis B vaccinations is available from Human Resources.

For further information about minimizing exposure to bloodborne pathogens or about Hepatitis B vaccinations, please consult the County Office's Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan or the Policies and Procedures Manual, or contact your supervisor.

## **Safety**

The County Office is committed to providing a safe and healthful work environment. In keeping with this commitment, the County Office has an Injury and Illness Prevention Program in place and complies with relevant federal and state occupational health and safety laws.

All employees are expected to work diligently to maintain safe and healthful working conditions, to participate in County Office safety programs, and to observe all established precautionary measures and safe work practices. No individual will be required to perform job duties under unsafe or hazardous conditions or to execute tasks which endanger their health, safety, or well-being. The County Office will endeavor to advise employees of occupational safety and health hazards and provide safety devices, protective equipment, and training on safe work practices.

### **REPORTING INJURIES**

Any job-related illness or injury, no matter how minor, should be reported to your supervisor immediately, then to the early intervention nurse (836-7457). ♦

If you identify an unsafe condition or an occupational safety or health hazard, please complete a Hazard Report form immediately and forward it to your supervisor. The Hazard Report form may be obtained from Business Services and can be submitted

confidentially, with or without your name and signature. If you are not comfortable submitting the report to your supervisor, please forward the form to Business Services.

Safety suggestions of any sort may be submitted, preferably in writing, to your supervisor or to the Health and Safety Committee. The County Office would like to assure you that you can provide reports on safety hazards, request safety information, or make safety suggestions without fear of reprisal.

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Employees should understand that compliance with safety requirements is a condition of employment that will be evaluated, together with other aspects of your performance, as part of the performance appraisal process. Due to the importance of safety considerations, employees who violate safety standards, cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or allow hazardous conditions to remain when they could be effectively remedied may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

For further information about safety issues, see the Injury and Illness Prevention Plan or contact your supervisor.

**Emergency preparedness**—Each County Office site has a disaster plan for employees to follow in the event of an earthquake, fire, or other major disaster. Your supervisor or the administrator at your site will provide you with a copy of the disaster plan for your location. Please familiarize yourself with the plan. Emergency preparedness drills will be conducted periodically to further acquaint you with the procedures to follow in an emergency.

**Disaster service worker status**—Under state law, County Office employees are considered “disaster service workers” and may be assigned to perform activities that promote the protection of public health and safety or the preservation of lives and property in the event of a declared emergency. Therefore, you are encouraged to attend all safety and disaster response training offered to employees and prepare your family to respond to a disaster even if you are not present.

**Use of cell phones when driving for work-related business**—When operating a vehicle to perform County Office business, employees are reminded to follow all applicable laws and to practice safe driving procedures. Employees who receive a cellular telephone (or cell phone stipend), pager, or telephone calling card for the purpose of conducting official business are expected to use a hands-free device and refrain from checking email or texting when using County Office-supplied telecommunications services while driving.

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## Facilities and Office Operations

County Office employees work in a variety of facilities throughout Sonoma County including the main office building on Skylane Boulevard, Sonoma Developmental Center, Juvenile Hall, classrooms at district sites, and other locations. Wherever you are assigned, please observe that facility's guidelines as they pertain to security, parking, equipment usage, and housekeeping procedures for common areas such as employee lounges and kitchens. Your supervisor or the administrator at your work site will acquaint you with applicable guidelines.

**Security**—Access to all County Office facilities is limited to authorized persons only and many facilities have security systems in place during non-work hours. If you require access to your job site during non-work hours, please see your supervisor. If approved, you may be issued keys and/or access cards and given detailed instructions about entering your site after hours. Please follow security guidelines carefully and exercise extreme care so that unauthorized persons do not enter the building.

You are also requested to secure files and clear work areas of confidential materials prior to departing your work location at the conclusion of your workday. At all times, it is advisable to see that your personal property and valuables are kept in a safe place.

**Energy conservation and recycling**—The County Office recognizes the value of energy conservation and recycling and requests employee participation in all efforts to implement environmentally responsible programs. A recycling program is in operation at the main County Office facility and at other assigned work locations. Please participate in the recycling program at your site, if applicable, and conserve energy whenever possible.

Telephone, email, Internet usage, and personal correspondence—County Office telephone and computer systems are intended for official business use. When replying to incoming telephone calls and email messages, employees are expected to treat every caller with respect and courtesy. It is requested that you keep personal calls and email brief and to a minimum. Please refrain from using County Office computers for personal Internet research or correspondence and arrange to have all personal mail sent to your home.

**Bulletin boards**—To ensure that employees have access to posted information, bulletin boards are located throughout our facilities in areas that employees frequently visit. Bulletin boards are used to communicate official government information on equal employment opportunity, wage and hour laws, health and safety regulations, and other issues. They are also used to communicate information of particular interest to employees.

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# Personnel Administration

## Merit System for Classified Employees

California's Education Code outlines a process of personnel administration for classified employees. This personnel process, called the Merit System, ensures that all classified personnel are selected, promoted, and retained without favoritism or prejudice, on the basis of merit and fitness. The Merit System is designed to provide an employment process that is focused on political neutrality, equal opportunity, and competitive merit.

The County Office of Education has adopted a Merit System for classified employees as set forth in the Education Code. A nonpartisan Personnel Commission oversees our Merit System and establishes the rules that govern the terms and conditions of classified employment. The Commission approves job classifications and salary schedules, reviews eligibility lists for employment, hears appeals on discipline, and serves as a forum for the concerns of classified employees. The Director of Human Resources is responsible for implementing classified employment procedures to conform with the regulations of the Merit System and the rules established by the Personnel Commission.

The Personnel Commission provides written documentation of the Merit System rules and regulations and encourages classified staff to become familiar with the contents of this document. The Merit System works in concert with the collective bargaining agreements that apply to classified staff.

You can access a copy of the Merit Rules in the SCOE Employees Center section our website, [www.scoe.org](http://www.scoe.org).

## Collective Bargaining Agreements

There are currently five collective bargaining units that represent employees of the County Office. Confidential and management employees are not represented. Thus, the terms and conditions of employment at the County Office are not the same for all individuals.

If you are a member of a collective bargaining unit, many of the terms and conditions of your employment—including your wages, holidays, vacation entitlement, etc.—are defined in the collective bargaining agreement entered into between the County Office and the

### PERSONNEL COMMISSIONERS

- Susan Jackson
- Sabrina Meyer
- Gail Whooley
- Fran Elm (alternate)

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction appoints local commissioners for three-year terms.

Personnel Commission meetings are generally held on the fourth Monday of the month at 3:00 P.M. at the County Office of Education. ♦

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union that represents you. Please refer to this document for current and specific information regarding your employment at the County Office. However, in addition to the items covered in collective bargaining agreements, there is other information that impacts your employment relationship with the County Office.

Since this Employee Handbook is a general publication prepared for all County Office employees, it is possible that a conflict may arise between an item in this Handbook and

an item in your collective bargaining agreement. If such a conflict does exist, the terms in your agreement will govern without nullifying any other items in this publication.

If you have questions regarding your employment as expressed in your collective bargaining agreement, contact your union representative. Other questions may be directed to your supervisor or the Human Resources department.

### **Position Announcements**

The County Office wishes to keep employees informed about internal job

openings in the hope and expectation that employees will find new opportunities to develop professionally while continuing in County Office employment. The Human Resources department has established a job posting program to give all employees an opportunity to apply for positions they are both interested in and qualified for. Announcements for all open positions are accessible via a link on the SCOE website to EdJoin, a statewide website where all open positions are listed. Information about job openings can also be obtained by phoning our job hotline at (707) 522-3104.

In order to be eligible for a posted position, you must meet the minimum hiring specifications and be an employee in good standing. You are responsible for monitoring job postings and for completing and filing all required application materials with the Human Resources department by the closing date and time specified. Applications must be received in the Human Resources department by 4:30 P.M. on the closing date. You are not required to notify your supervisor when submitting an application for a posted position.

Should you have questions about any posted position, want to learn more about specific job duties, or need assistance determining whether you meet the minimum qualifications, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Resources staff for assistance.

### **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UNITS**

- AFT, American Federation of Teachers, Local 1946  
(Corrections/Vocational and Skills Training)
- AFT, American Federation of Teachers, Local 1946  
(Sonoma Developmental Center/Adult Services)
- ASCOE, Association of Sonoma County Office of Education
- ROPTA, Regional Occupational Program Teachers Association
- SEIU, Service Employees International Union, Local 1021

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## **Employment of Relatives**

The County Office permits the employment of qualified relatives of employees as long as such employment does not, in the opinion of the County Office, create actual or perceived conflict of interest. In order to preclude situations of possible conflict of interest, the County Office will not appoint an employee to a position over which a member of their immediate family maintains supervisory or evaluation responsibilities. Immediate family as used here means grandparents, parents, spouses, siblings, children, grandchildren, or in-laws.

## **Reference Requests**

All inquiries about current and former employees of the County Office, including requests for verifications of employment, employment references, and requests for information about the cause or reason for separation from County Office employment, should be forwarded to the Human Resources department. Letters of recommendation issued on behalf of the County Office for current or former employees must first be submitted to an assistant superintendent or the Human Resources department for approval.

Individuals not acting on behalf of the County Office may agree to provide a letter of recommendation, but only authorized recommendations may be provided on County Office letterhead.

Should you desire to use the County Office as a reference, please be advised that all inquiries will be answered truthfully and accurately by authorized personnel.

Questions regarding reference requests may be directed to your supervisor or the Human Resources department.

## **Disciplinary Action**

The County Office wishes to promote a cooperative and supportive working relationship with employees and places trust in the abilities of its staff. However, in those instances when employees act improperly due to unthinking behavior or willful neglect, a fair and orderly process for employee discipline will be implemented in accordance with Merit System rules, the County Superintendent's Policies and Procedures Manual, and collective bargaining agreements.

If an employee fails to correct a deficient work habit or violates established policies, contracts, agreements and/or laws, disciplinary action will be recommended. Whenever possible, discipline will be progressive in nature, with the severity of discipline tailored to the offense or deficiency. The degree of discipline administered in any given situation depends upon the severity of the infraction. Your supervisor is responsible for thoroughly evaluating circumstances and facts as objectively as possible and selecting the most suitable form of discipline.

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If you have questions about employee discipline, your supervisor, the Human Resources department, or your employee representative can provide you with additional information.

## **Employee Recognition**

The County Office wishes to recognize employees who provide exceptional contributions or exemplary service to our operations. Employee awards are presented annually to an outstanding certificated, classified, and management employee for service to the County Office (Golden Bell Awards) and to the County Office employee who has best served local school districts (Outstanding Service Award).

A committee is appointed by the County Superintendent to review nominations and select annual award recipients. Nominations are provided by County Office and district staff for employees who:

- Propose ideas or procedures which improve the efficiency of operations;
- Perform special acts or services in the public interest;
- Provide exemplary service to local school districts, clients, and the public;
- Make exceptional contributions to the effectiveness of County Office operations by superior accomplishments;
- Contribute to the improvement of educational programs;
- Enhance job performance by initiating self-improvement.

Employee awards are presented at the start of each school year. Also recognized are employees who have completed 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, or more years of service for the County Office.

In addition, the Personnel Commission has established a Team Player Award, which is presented annually to a classified employee who has an exemplary record in the areas of community involvement, workplace performance, integrity, and overall attendance.