Strive Niagara

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



Table of Contents

Employee Handbook Issues And Updates	2
Introduction	3
Joining Our Organization	
Hours of Work, Overtime, Holidays & Vacation	6
Leaves of Absence	9
Attendance Policy and Scheduling	12
Discipline Policy	13
Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy	15
Accommodation Policy	20
Confidentiality	22
Drug and Alcohol Policy	25
Internet and Email Policy	26
Smoke-free Workplace Policy	28
Social Media Policy	29
Personal Electronic Device Use Policy	31
Company Equipment Policy	32
Termination of Employment	33
Schedule "A": Employee Acknowledgement Form	34
Vacation request form	35
Statutory Leave Notice Form	35
Non-Statutory Leave Form	35
Employee Onboarding Form	35

Employee Handbook Issues And Updates

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Introduction

WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

Strive Niagara ("we" or the "Organization") would like to wish you every success during your employment whether you recently joined us, or you are an existing employee. We hope that your experience here will be positive and rewarding.

This Employee Handbook ("Handbook") contains a summary of our workplace policies and procedures. Please review this Handbook in its entirety and ensure that you are familiar with its contents. Having a working knowledge of this document will greatly assist you in carrying out your day-to-day duties and responsibilities. Should you have any questions about the information contained in this Handbook, please do not hesitate to contact our management team.

Over time, and as the needs of our Organization change, our policies and procedures will have to be updated and revised. While we reserve the right to make changes to this Handbook without notice to you, we will try to communicate any such amendments as soon as possible. Also, it may be necessary for us to modify this Handbook from time to time because of changes in law.

This Handbook shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the Ontario *Employment Standards Act, 2000,* and the regulations as amended from time to time (collectively referred to as the "ESA" or the "Act").

For further clarity, should any provision of this Handbook conflict with the provisions of the ESA, or any other applicable legislation, then the provisions of the ESA or other applicable legislation shall prevail.

Similarly, should the ESA, or any other applicable legislation, impose any requirement not included in this policy, or if the ESA, or any other applicable legislation, is amended so as to provide greater or lesser benefits, or impose greater or lesser obligations, than those set out in this Policy, then the provisions of the ESA, and all other applicable legislation shall prevail.

After you have read this Handbook in its entirety and have familiarized yourself with its contents, please sign the Employee Acknowledgement Form found at Schedule "A" of this document and submit it to management.

Joining Our Organization

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Organization strives to maintain a workplace that fosters personal and professional growth for all employees. We also aim to ensure that all staff members are treated fairly and with dignity. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Organization and its employees to:

- 1. Cooperate and communicate;
- 2. Encourage and consider opinions of other employees and invite their participation in decisions that affect their careers;
- 3. Encourage the growth and development of fellow workers by helping them achieve both personal and professional goals;
- 4. Strive to avoid workplace conflict, and if it occurs, resolve it quickly and fairly;
- 5. Administer all policies and procedures equitably and fairly; and,
- 6. Recognize that each employee has the right to be treated fairly and with dignity.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Organization strives to provide a welcoming and professional environment for its employees, clients and visitors. This policy sets out the employee responsibilities for ensuring that all employees and clients have a high-quality experience.

- Employees should treat clients with respect and professionalism.
- Employees should avoid the use of vulgar or profane language, as well as excessive loudness.
- Respect clients regardless of age, gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, body type, political affiliation, state of health or personal habits.
- Employees should not spread gossip, rumours or engage in behaviour that creates friction and threatens the well-being of other employees or clients.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

We are an equal opportunity employer and employ personnel without regard to race, colour, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, record of offences, marital status, family status or sexual orientation.

It is our policy to select the best qualified person for each position within our organization based on demonstrated ability, experience, training and potential. This policy applies to all our employment and personnel practices, including decisions regarding hiring, transfer, promotion, demotion and dismissal.

In addition, the Organization pays compensation based on comparable value and does not discriminate in employment based on gender.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

The Organization reserves the right to require applicants and existing employees to consent to background checks to ensure staff members possess the requisite skills.

Background checks may include, but are not limited to:

- Criminal background and police checks
- Academic and professional reference checks
- Any other inquiries required and/or permitted by law

Existing employees may be asked to consent to background checks in the event of changes to their employment, such as transfers, promotions or modifications to their duties.

It is important that the information that is provided to us is complete and accurate. Any misrepresentation, falsification or material omission of information provided to us may result in the rescission of a conditional offer of employment or discipline up to and including dismissal.

DRESS CODE POLICY

Overview

We recognize the diversity of our employees and will make reasonable efforts to accommodate requests for an exception to this policy, while having regard for our organization needs.

This policy is not exhaustive in defining acceptable and unacceptable standards of dress and appearance. Staff should use common sense in adhering to the overall intention of this policy, as explained above.

Application

This policy applies to all employees as well as temporary agency workers, volunteers, students, trainees, and apprentices (if applicable). Failure to adhere to our standards of dress and appearance may result in discipline. The management team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is followed.

Dress Code

The Business has established a casual dress code to allow employees to work comfortably and efficiently.

Examples of Unacceptable Attire include: any inappropriate logos/slogans, ripped or torn clothing, large hoop earrings or dangly earrings, and flip flops.

It is imperative, given the nature of our business, that all staff maintain impeccable grooming and personal hygiene habits. All employees must maintain a neat and tidy appearance.

Please remember that co-workers or parents/patients may have allergies or sensitivities to scents and therefore employees should avoid excessive use of scents, perfume and cologne.

Hours of Work, Overtime, Holidays & Vacation

HOURS OF WORK

Our regular business hours are as typically as follows (except for holidays):

Monday: 7:45 AM - 5:00 PM Tuesday: 7:45 AM - 5:00 PM Wednesday: 7:45 AM - 5:00 PM Thursday: 7:45 AM - 5:00 PM Friday: 7:45 AM - 5:00 PM

Saturday: Closed Sunday: Closed

Our regular hours may vary and be subjected to change to adhere to the needs of each location.

All employees are expected to work their scheduled shift, including an unpaid half-hour lunch break. Employees may also be expected to work other hours as may be requested or required from time to time in order to meet the needs and objectives of the Organization.

The Organization reserves the right to alter the regular work week and regular work hours at any time, although we will provide as much advance notice as possible.

Where applicable under the ESA, the employee is required to take a 30-minute unpaid rest period after five (5) consecutive hours of work. The precise scheduling of rest periods will be determined by management and are subject to the needs of the Organization.

OVERTIME

General

Unless ineligible under the ESA, employees may be entitled to overtime pay for working a certain number of hours in a week, as set out in the ESA. Furthermore, unless an employee's contract of employment states otherwise, overtime pay will be paid at one and a half (1.5) times an employee's regular rate of pay.

Employees must always receive prior written approval from their manager before working overtime. Employees who work overtime without the approval of management will be subject to discipline.

Abuse of the overtime policy is considered serious misconduct and will result in discipline up to and including dismissal.

Managers & Supervisors

Managers and supervisors do not qualify for overtime. Even if they perform other kinds of tasks that are not managerial or supervisory, they do not get overtime pay if these tasks are performed only on an irregular or exceptional basis.

Travel

Business Travel

Business travel on a non-workday will be paid in accordance with the ESA. Travel time may be paid at a different rate of pay from the employee's usual rate but will be at least the minimum wage under the ESA.

If travel is part of the employee's job or could be reasonably expected to occur while performing one's duties, it is work time. Some travel, which may be exceptional to the employee's normal duties, will be paid in accordance with the ESA.

Travel to and from work

Travelling to and from work does not qualify as work time.

"Banking" Overtime

If both an employee and the Organization agree in writing, an employee may receive paid time off instead of overtime pay. This is called "banked" time or "time off in lieu".

Time off in lieu is earned at the rate of one and a half (1.5) hours of paid time off work for each hour of overtime worked.

Paid time off must be taken within three (3) months of the end of the work week in which it was earned or, with the employee's agreement, within twelve (12) months of that work week. However, any banked time must be taken on a date mutually agreed upon in advance by the Organization and the employee.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

The Organization adheres to the public holiday provisions of the ESA, as amended from time to time, and will administer this policy in accordance with the requirements of the Act. Eligible employees are entitled to the following 9 public holidays stated in the ESA with pay:

- New Year's Day
- Family Day
- Good Friday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day
- Labour Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day

Additional Holidays

Employees are also entitled to Easter Monday and Civic Holiday, with the same holiday pay rules as set out below.

In addition, the Business reserves the right to close its office from Christmas Day to New Year's Day, during March break and summer break. This policy will be reviewed annually and will depend on operational requirements of each location.

These non-statutory days off will have no impact on an employee's vacation or lieu time.

Holiday Pay

Employees who qualify for public holiday pay under the ESA will receive holiday pay calculated in accordance with the Act.

If an employee agrees to work on a holiday in accordance with the Act, they shall be compensated in accordance with the Act.

In any event, this policy shall always be applied in accordance with the ESA and under no circumstances will an employee receive less than their full entitlements under the ESA, as amended from time to time.

VACATION

Vacation Time

All employees are required to take their vacation time in the calendar year in which the vacation time is earned. Vacation requests must be submitted for supervisors' approval 2 weeks prior to time off requested.

To meet business needs during times of high demand, the Business has implemented vacation blackout periods, during which employees cannot take vacation time. For supervisors, the vacation blackout dates include the last two weeks of August and for ECE staff, the first 3 weeks of September.

Each employee's vacation entitlement, and the method for determining that entitlement, will be specifically set out in the employee's contract of employment. If not, it will be determined in accordance with the ESA.

If employees have already used their earned vacation time, they may be granted for an additional one (1) week of unpaid vacation days upon the discretion of their direct supervisor/manager.

You will not be permitted to carry vacation time over to a subsequent year unless you obtain approval in writing from management. However, at no time will you receive less than your vacation entitlements under the ESA.

Scheduling Vacations

All vacation requests must be made by submitting to management a completed Form A (Vacation Request Form), which can be found in the Appendix hereto; or request on BrightHR. All requests for vacation must be submitted for approval at least 14 days before the start of the proposed vacation period. First come and first served basis.

All vacations must be approved by management in advance. While the Organization will make every effort to accommodate employee vacation requests, the timing of an employee's vacation is ultimately subject to management's discretion and the needs of the Organization.

Furthermore, the Organization reserves the right to withdraw approval for a vacation should circumstances require it. However, should that occur, we will make reasonable efforts to minimize any inconvenience or hardship to the employee.

To meet business needs during times of high demand, the Business has implemented vacation blackout periods, during which employees cannot take vacation time. The vacation blackout dates include the week after Labour Day. This policy is subjected to change upon the discretion of the direct supervisor of each location.

Leaves of Absence

STATUTORY LEAVES OF ABSENCE

The ESA sets out several different statutory leaves of absence that can be taken by employees. For a complete list and details regarding each leave, please consult the ESA under Part 14.

When an employee takes a statutory leave of absence, the employee must make management aware by submitting a **Form B** (Statutory Leave Notice Form), notifying the manager in writing, or both.

Below are the available statutory leaves prescribed by the ESA that require employees to submit a Form B **and** notify management in writing prior to commencing the leave:

- · Bereavement Leave
- Family Responsibility Leave
- Sick Leave
- Pregnancy and Parental Leave
- Reservist Leave
- Organ Donor Leave

Employees must notify their manager in writing as soon as is reasonable before taking the above statutory leaves by submitting a completed Form B, which can be found in the Appendix hereto. However, if, due to their circumstances, they must commence the leave before notifying management, they must submit the completed Form B as soon as possible.

Also, we may require that the employee provides evidence reasonable in the circumstances that they were entitled to the leave.

Below are the available statutory leaves prescribed by the ESA that require employees to notify management in writing prior to commencing the leave:

- Domestic or Sexual Violence Leave
- · Family Medical Leave
- · Critical Illness Leave
- Child Death Leave
- Crime-Related Child Disappearance Leave
- Family Caregiver Leave
- Emergency Leave

Employees must notify their manager in writing as soon as is reasonable before taking the above statutory leaves of absence. However, if, due to their circumstances, they must commence the leave before notifying management, they must do so as soon as possible.

PAID SICK DAYS

In addition to the statutory leaves prescribed by the ESA, permanent employees will be eligible for 4 paid sick days per calendar year. These days cannot be carried into the following year and cannot be used to extend vacation time.

PAID BEREAVEMENT DAYS

In addition to the statutory leaves prescribed by the ESA, permanent employees will be eligible for 3 paid days for Bereavement Leave. These days cannot be carried into the following year and cannot be used to extend vacation time. Additional unpaid days may be granted upon the discretion of their direct supervisor and the operational needs of each location.

PAID FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY DAYS

In addition to the statutory leaves prescribed by the ESA, permanent employees will be eligible for 3 paid days for Family Responsibility Leave. These days cannot be carried into the following year and cannot be used to extend vacation time.

PAID PERSONAL DAY

In addition to the statutory leaves prescribed by the ESA, permanent employees will be eligible for 1 paid Personal day. This day cannot be carried into the following year and cannot be used to extend vacation time.

EFFECT OF A LEAVE

The purposes of the foregoing leaves, their length, and eligibility criteria vary. An employee may be entitled to more than one leave for the same event. Each leave is separate and the right to each leave is independent of any right an employee may have to the other leave(s).

Please read the ESA for a detailed explanation of your leave entitlements.

Unless otherwise required by law, while an employee is on a leave, their terms of employment will remain the same and the Organization will continue to pay its share of the premiums required to maintain benefits, if any, which were available to the employee prior to the leave. However, if an employee on leave elects in writing not to continue participating in any applicable benefit plans while on a leave of absence, the Organization will not continue to make its employer's contributions to the benefit plans while the employee remains on leave.

OTHER LEAVES OF ABSENCE

The Organization recognizes that there may be times when employees need to take a leave of absence from work for reasons other than those identified above. While it is impossible to define all the circumstances in which an employee will require time away from work, this policy is intended to provide some general guidelines.

The Organization will consider, among other things, the following factors when it receives requests for a leave of absence not otherwise legislated:

- Previous requests for a leave of absence;
- The availability of suitable replacement staff;
- The time of year at which the request is made; and,
- The purposes of the leave.

All requests for a leave of absence will be considered on an unpaid basis and without a continuation of benefits, unless otherwise stated and expressly indicated in writing by the Organization or required by law.

If an employee wishes to request an additional leave of absence, they must provide at least 30 days' notice to their manager by submitting a completed **Form C** (Non-Statutory Leave Notice Form), which can be found in the Appendix hereto. However, if, due to their circumstances, the employee must commence a leave before notifying management, then they must submit the completed Form C as soon as possible.

Attendance Policy and Scheduling

Employees are required to report to work in accordance with their approved schedules. This includes maintaining regular attendance and arriving to work for their scheduled start time.

CALL IN PROCEDURES

In the event of an absence, employees are required to call in/text/email to report the absence to their manager at least two (2) hours before their scheduled start time. If an absence can be scheduled in advance, an employee is required to do so in writing to their manager.

Where it is impossible for an employee to report an absence because of hospitalization or for other emergency related reasons, the employee may have a family member or friend report the absence at the first available opportunity.

In the event of a late arrival, employees are required to call in/text/email to report their late arrival to their manager as soon as possible.

If an employee must leave work early, they must notify their manager as soon as possible. The employee will be expected to make up the lost time during the work week in which the early departure occurs.

If late arrivals or early departures can be scheduled in advance, an employee is required to do so in writing to their supervisor.

MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION

Employees are required to provide medical documentation (at the employee's expense) after the 3rd consecutive sick day taken after they have exhausted their annual Sick Leave entitlement.

CULPABLE ABSENTEEISM

An employee may be disciplined up to and including dismissal for culpable absenteeism. Culpable absenteeism refers to absences that are "blameworthy" in the sense that they involve the unjustified withdrawal of services by an employee – for example, failing to show up for work on time or failing to request and/or report an absence in accordance with this policy.

ABSENCES FOR APPOINTMENTS

All appointments (e.g. doctor/dentist appointment, etc.) should be scheduled outside of normal working time. Time off for appointments that can only be scheduled during working hours must be approved by the employee's manager.

BREAKS

The ESA requires that qualified employees take a half (0.5) hour break every five (5) hours. This requirement must be taken into consideration if the employee wishes to make up some or all the time through their lunch period.

Discipline Policy

The Organization is committed to fair and constructive treatment of unacceptable work performance. The following progressive discipline process will, where appropriate, be carried out with the intent of improving employee behaviour and/or performance.

IDENTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE ISSUES

The employee's manager is responsible for promptly identifying and responding to any unsatisfactory conduct or performance by the employee. Before initiating our progressive discipline process, the manager shall first communicate our expectations to the employee both verbally and in writing so that the employee is fully aware of the standards expected of him or her and that failure to comply with those standards will result in discipline.

The Organization may place an employee on a performance improvement plan at any time, including before or during the four-step progressive discipline policy as detailed below.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

If the employee's performance continues to fall short of acceptable standards or if the employee commits a serious initial act of misconduct, such as violating the rules set out in this policy, the employee's supervisor shall initiate the progressive discipline policy, which involves a verbal warning, a written warning, a final written warning, and a dismissal if management deems appropriate.

The Organization, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to bypass any and all of the below progressive discipline steps as deemed appropriate. The Organization will assess all employee performance and behaviour-based issues on a case-by-case basis and may treat each issue differently in accordance with the severity and/or frequency of the issue.

Step One: Verbal Warning

The employee's manager shall meet privately with the employee to discuss their performance issues and warn the employee that failure to correct their conduct could lead to further discipline up to and including termination of employment. The manager shall discuss with the employee ways to bring about improvements in the employee's performance.

If the Organization determines that it is appropriate, the employee will be placed on a performance improvement plan with the aim of helping the employee correct their behaviour and improve their work performance.

Step Two: Written Warning

If an employee's performance does not improve following Step 1, then the employee shall receive a written warning that their continued misconduct could lead to further disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. The employee's manager will again discuss with the employee ways to bring about improvements in the employee's performance.

If the Organization determines that it is appropriate, the employee will be placed on a new or updated performance improvement plan with the aim of helping the employee correct their behaviour and improve their work performance.

Step Three: Final Written Warning

The final written warning is the last time the employee will be issued a warning before the Organization proceeds with terminating the employee.

During this step, the Organization will require the employee to provide an explanation as to why their performance continues to suffer so the Organization has a final chance to work with the employee before they are terminated. Similar to the previous steps, the employee's manager will discuss with the employee ways to bring about improvements in the employee's performance.

If the Organization determines that it is appropriate, the employee will be placed on a new or updated performance improvement plan with the aim of helping the employee correct their behaviour and improve their work performance.

Step Four: Dismissal

If the employee's misconduct continues after Step 3, then the employee will be terminated.

EXCEPTION FOR SERIOUS MISCONDUCT

The Organization reserves the right to dismiss an employee prior to carrying out any or all of the steps set out above where, in its sole discretion, we determine that the employee has engaged in serious and wilful misconduct – for example, theft, breach of confidentiality, workplace violence, discrimination and/or harassment.

All registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) must adhere and follow the college of ECE's code of ethics and standards of practice.

First Aid/CPR training must remain up to date.

Police Vulnerable Sector check must be completed and kept current.

Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

The Organization is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination and harassment, in which all individuals are treated with respect, dignity and have equal opportunities.

Under the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, every person has the right to freedom from harassment and discrimination in employment.

Harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated, condoned, or ignored. If a claim of harassment or discrimination is proven, disciplinary measures will be applied against the offending employee(s), up to and including dismissal.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure that all staff and clients are aware that harassment and discrimination are unacceptable practices and are incompatible with our standards, as well as being a violation of the law:
- Set out the types of behaviour that may be considered offensive and are prohibited by this policy; and,
- Promote appropriate standards of conduct at all times.

APPLICATION

The right to freedom from discrimination and harassment extends to all employees, including full-time, part-time, temporary and contract staff, as well as volunteers, co-op students, interns and apprentices.

It is also unacceptable for members of staff or contractors working on our behalf to engage in harassment or discrimination when dealing with clients, or with others with whom they have professional dealings, such as suppliers, service providers and potential clients.

This policy applies to every level of our organization and to every aspect of the workplace environment and employment relationship, including recruitment, selection, promotion, transfers, training, salaries, benefits and termination. It also covers rates of pay, overtime, hours of work, holidays, discipline and performance evaluations.

Furthermore, this policy applies to events that occur outside of the physical workplace, such as during organizational trips and company parties.

PROTECTED GROUNDS

This policy prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the protected grounds listed in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, and any combination of such grounds.

DEFINITIONS OF PROHITITED BEHAVIOUR

For the purposes of this policy:

- "Discrimination" means any form of unequal treatment based on a protected ground, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It may be intentional or unintentional. It may involve direct actions that are discriminatory on their face, or it may involve rules, practices or procedures that appear neutral, but have the effect of disadvantaging certain groups of people.
- "Harassment" means a course of vexatious comments or actions that are known, or ought to reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. It can involve words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning, or unwelcome. Prohibited harassment is not necessarily based on any prohibited grounds.
- "Sexual Harassment" means:
 - engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome; and/or
 - making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker and the person knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome.

Examples of Prohibited Behaviour

Examples of the type of behaviour prohibited by this policy include but are not limited to:

- Any form of sexual harassment, including touching, petting, pinching, kissing, unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances, requests, or invitations, leering or other suggestive gestures;
- The display of visual sexual material that is offensive, or which one ought to know, is offensive;
- Bullying;
- Demeaning and/or belittling comments;
- Nicknames, remarks, jokes or innuendos related to a protected ground;
- Obscene remarks or gestures;
- Display or circulation of offensive pictures, graffiti or materials, whether in print form or via e-mail or other electronic means;
- Singling out an individual for humiliating or demeaning teasing or jokes because they are a member of a protected group;
- Comments ridiculing an individual because of characteristics that are related to a protected ground; and,
- Creating a poisoned work environment through comments or conduct. The
 comments or conduct may not be directed at a specific individual, and may be from
 any individual, regardless of position or status. A single comment or action, if
 sufficiently serious may create a poisoned environment.

What isn't Workplace Harassment or Discrimination?

Reasonable action or conduct by a manager or employee that is part of his/her normal work function will not normally be considered harassing or discriminatory. This is the case even if there are sometimes unpleasant consequences for an employee. Examples include:

Changes in work assignments;

- Scheduling;
- Job assessment and evaluation;
- Workplace inspections;
- Implementation and enforcement of dress codes; and,
- Counselling/disciplinary action.

Differences of opinion or minor disagreements between co-workers will also generally not be considered workplace harassment.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees are expected to uphold and abide by this policy, by refraining from any form of harassment or discrimination, and by cooperating fully in any investigation of a harassment or discrimination complaint.

Managers have the additional responsibility to act immediately on observations or allegations of harassment or discrimination. Managers are responsible for creating and maintaining a harassment and discrimination-free organization and should address potential problems before they become serious.

Any employee who believes they have been subjected to workplace discrimination or harassment should report the matter to their manager for investigation in accordance with the procedures set out below. If an employee's manager is alleged to have engaged in workplace discrimination or harassment, the employee may report such matters to the next level of management.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Step One: Reporting

A report should include details about the alleged incident(s), including the date(s), time(s) and location(s), what happened, who was involved and the names of any witnesses.

If an emergency exists and the situation is one of immediate danger, then it should be immediately reported to the police by dialing "9-1-1" as soon as it is safe to do so. A person in a situation of immediate danger must at the same time take whatever steps are necessary to ensure their own safety and to protect themselves against harm or injury. Once an employee is safe, then he or she can then report the matter to management.

A manager in receipt of any report or complaint by an employee of workplace discrimination or harassment, or who otherwise becomes aware of any allegation of workplace discrimination or harassment, shall immediately notify the complaints officer.

Step Two: Workplace Investigation

The investigator, upon receipt of a complaint or allegation of workplace discrimination or harassment, shall conduct a prompt, thorough and confidential investigation into the allegation or complaint.

The Organization will also conduct an investigation if it indirectly becomes aware of an incident of workplace harassment or discriminatory conduct, such as where an employee witnesses an incident of workplace harassment or discrimination or learns about it from a third party.

The Organization may, at its discretion or where required, utilize the services of a third-party investigator, outside legal counsel, or such other external expertise as necessary in the circumstances.

Under no circumstances will a complaint or allegation be investigated by the individual who is the alleged harasser or by the individual who is alleged to have engaged in discriminatory conduct. Furthermore, under no circumstances will a complaint be investigated by an individual who is under the direct control of the alleged harasser or by an individual who is alleged to have engaged in discriminatory conduct.

The investigation procedure is as follows:

- 1. <u>Interview with the complainant</u>: The investigator will interview the complainant concerning the facts underlying their allegation(s).
- 2. <u>Interview with the respondent</u>: The investigator will interview the employee accused of committing the workplace discrimination or harassment. The employee will be asked for their response to the allegation(s) being made and for their side of the story.
- 3. <u>Interviews with witnesses and other individuals</u>: The investigator will then interview any other employees or individuals who may have witnessed the incidents of alleged workplace discrimination or harassment, or who may otherwise be able to provide information relevant to the investigation.
- 4. <u>Records</u>: The investigation will be documented, and the record will consist of, among other things, detailed notes of all interviews with employees and witnesses and all other information relevant to the investigation.
- 5. Report: The results of the investigation will be reported, in writing, to management. The results will include an assessment of the validity of the complaint.

Step Three: Action

The results of an investigation must be communicated in writing to the worker(s) who has/have claimed the alleged harassment or discrimination and to the alleged harasser, if he or she is a worker of the employer. Where an investigation results in disciplinary action, the complainant(s) and the respondent(s) will be informed in writing. If the investigation does not corroborate the complaint(s), then the complainant(s) and the respondent(s) will be advised in writing and the matter will be closed. It is important to note that the results of the investigation are not the same as the investigation report. The results of the investigation are a summary of the findings of the investigation.

If the investigation corroborates the complaint(s) to the satisfaction of the Organization, then the Organization will, among other things, take appropriate disciplinary action against the offending employee(s), and any other measures it deems necessary to properly address the incident and prevent future incidences of workplace discrimination and harassment. The nature and extent of any disciplinary or remedial action will be determined by the Organization in its sole discretion and may include dismissal of the offending employee(s) for cause. The Organization may require that a worker participate in an anger management program or other form of counselling, either voluntarily or as a condition of continued employment.

PROTECTION FROM RETALIATION

No retaliation or reprisals will be undertaken or tolerated against any employee who, in good faith, complains of, reports or participates in the investigation of any allegations of workplace discrimination or harassment.

EMPLOYEE COOPERATION

If it is necessary for the purposes of completing, carrying out or protecting the integrity of an investigation, or if it is necessary to maintain a work environment that is safe and free of harassment and discrimination, the Organization may require an employee to remain out of the workplace while an investigation is being conducted.

The participation and cooperation of all employees is critical to the development and implementation of this policy. The refusal or failure of any employee to cooperate with the Organization is a serious form of misconduct for which an employee may be disciplined up to and including dismissal.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Organization recognizes the difficulty of coming forward with a complaint of workplace discrimination or harassment and a complainant's interest in keeping the matter confidential. To protect the interests of the complainant, the respondent, persons who may report incidents of workplace harassment and the integrity of the process, confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process and information relating to the complaint will be disclosed only to the extent necessary for the purposes of investigating or taking corrective action with respect to the incident or complaint or is otherwise required by law.

All individuals involved in a workplace investigation are expected to keep the substance of the investigation strictly confidential. Unless otherwise set out in this policy, all records of complaints, including records of meetings, interviews, results of investigations and other relevant material, will be maintained in a confidential file and will be disclosed only to the extent necessary to carry out these procedures and where disclosure is required by law.

All such records will be retained in accordance with our privacy policy and procedures.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be monitored on an ongoing basis and shall be reviewed annually.

Accommodation Policy

The Organization is committed to its duty to accommodate an employee and to actively engage in the accommodation process with employees, their physicians, and, where applicable, their representatives.

This policy covers all employees of the Organization requiring short or long-term accommodation because of any injuries, disabilities, or illness originating on or off the job, or any other protected need or rights under applicable human rights legislation.

The process described in this policy applies when accommodation is requested and documented by an employee, by a qualified medical care provider or physician on behalf of an employee, or objectively determined and documented by management.

ACCOMMODATION PROCESS

The accommodation process involves a systematic and in-depth review of the job requirements and the limitations or performance problems the accommodation needs creates.

The purpose of this review is to identify changes or modifications that may allow the employee to perform the essential job duties free from workplace obstacles.

Accommodation is a shared responsibility between employees requesting accommodation and the Organization.

A review to determine the feasibility, type and duration of accommodation involves an interactive process and dialogue that should involve at a minimum the employee requesting the accommodation and local management. Depending on the circumstances, the Organization may also mandate a third party to help with the assessment of the available positions and determining the possible accommodations.

Each request for accommodation will be assessed on a case by case basis, considering, among other things, the employee's particular situation and the potential impact of the requested accommodation on the Organization. This process may take several discussions to determine the feasibility, type and duration of accommodation. Other factors, including the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of his or her role with the accommodation and the reasonableness of the accommodation, will be considered.

If the Organization determines that it cannot reasonably accommodate the employee's request, the employee's continued employment with the Organization will be assessed based on applicable employment laws and regulations, the Organization's policies and procedures, and any collective bargaining agreements. During continued employment, the Organization will continue the interactive process towards identifying accommodation(s) that meets the needs of the employee and does not create an undue hardship on the Organization.

The Organization may require an employee to provide medical documentation supporting the requested accommodation. Acceptable documentation will clearly include the employee's specific functional limitations, the prognosis for recovery and the anticipated length of time the accommodation will be required. Vague or generic statements in documents are not acceptable. Examples of unacceptable statement include: "light duty", "cannot work full time", or "can only be assigned to [particular piece of equipment or task]". If an employee refuses to provide this supporting documentation, the employee may not be entitled to reasonable accommodation.

The Organization has the right to retain and use a medical professional of its choice to review and advise it on accommodation matters and to review relevant documentation and the employee has the obligation to cooperate with this process.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Organization is responsible for:

- providing information to employees about accommodation and return-to-work assistance;
- identifying and eliminating barriers that may prevent an employee from performing his or her job;
- managing employee requests for accommodation in a timely, confidential and sensitive manner;
- ensuring that appropriate individuals are involved in the accommodation process;
- informing individuals as to what information and documentation they need to provide to facilitate the accommodation process; and,
- initiating discussions about accommodations with employees where appropriate.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees are responsible for:

- making their accommodation needs known to management;
- helping to identify potential accommodation options;
- providing information and documentation in support of their request for accommodation;
- accepting the accommodation solution that meets their needs, even if it is not their preferred accommodation option; and,
- informing the Organization of any changes to their needs to allow it to properly assess and revise any accommodation, if required.

Confidentiality

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

In the course of your employment, you may receive confidential information about the Organization and its clients (including client names and contact information) and employees (collectively, "confidential information"). Disclosure of any confidential information would be highly detrimental to the Organization's best interests. As such, all employees, volunteers and other agents shall:

- Take precautions to protect and maintain all confidential information;
- Only release confidential information to those authorized to receive it;
- Not disclose, publish or distribute (including by way of social media) confidential information to any unauthorized persons, including the media, at any time;
- Not remove confidential information from its premises or your workplace without its express permission;
- Not make improper use of confidential information, either directly or indirectly; and,
- Safeguard against unintentionally disclosing confidential information that is, by not discussing confidential information in public and by not working with confidential information on a laptop in public or transmitting such information by unsecured means.

When your employment ends, you must immediately return all materials or property belonging to the Organization. You agree not to retain, reproduce or use any confidential or proprietary information or property belonging to the Organization, including lists of its clients and/or employees.

HANDLING CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

The following rules govern how all employees, independent contractors, volunteers, and other agents shall handle and store confidential information:

- 1. Confidential information shall be circulated in sealed envelopes or storage cases.
- Address and mark confidential envelopes with the words "PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL". These envelopes are to be opened only by the persons to whom they are addressed or by persons designated by management as being responsible for handling confidential material.
- 3. If applicable, handle confidential information with care and, where appropriate, place documents in the shredding receptacles located throughout the office.
- 4. If applicable, when faxing confidential material, the sender should inform the intended recipient and confirm that the fax machine is intended to receive confidential information. Where possible, fax numbers should be programmed into the speed dialling feature of fax machines to avoid the risks of misdialing.
- 5. At the end of the working day, individuals must lock doors, desks, filing cabinets and any other storage cabinets containing confidential information. Such cabinets and storage facilities must always be closed and secure.

PROTECTION OF ELECTRONIC DATA

If applicable, the following rules govern the handling of electronic data:

- 1. Individuals must log off their computer at the end of every shift or workday or when they are to be away from their desks for an extended period of time.
- 2. Computer passwords are to be changed semi-annually.
- 3. Individuals must safeguard and must not disclose their computer access codes or any other access mechanisms they have. In that regard, each person is responsible for all activity that occurs while using their access codes or other mechanisms, except where this information was obtained by fraudulent means and the individual in question could not have prevented such unauthorized use through diligent precautionary measures.
- 4. Where possible, computer monitors should be positioned so that they cannot be seen easily by anyone other than the user.

BREACHES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Anyone who becomes aware of a breach of confidentiality, or who suspects that a breach has occurred, must report the incident to their manager or to another member of management immediately. An investigation will then be conducted as expeditiously as possible to determine how the breach occurred and, if possible, who was responsible for the breach.

Anyone who becomes aware of an unauthorized or fraudulent use of their access codes or access mechanisms must immediately notify their manager or another member of management.

ACCESS TO PERSONNEL FILES

All personnel files are private and confidential. Unless specifically provided for in this policy, or as may be required by law, no person shall be permitted to access to these files.

Employees may be permitted reasonable and timely access to their personnel file upon submitting a request to their manager. Personnel files are the property of the Organization.

At no time shall such files be removed, copied, or destroyed without appropriate authorization.

USE OF PERSONAL DATA

The *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* ("PIPEDA") regulates our use of your personal data, in addition to any other privacy legislation that is applicable. As an employer, it is our responsibility to ensure that the personal data we process in relation to you is done so in accordance with the required principles. Any data held will be processed fairly and lawfully and in accordance with the rights of our employees.

We will process data in line with the applicable legislation in relation to both job applicants and employees.

You have certain rights in relation to your data. More information about these rights is available in our Privacy Policy. We are committed to ensuring that your rights are respected in accordance with the law and have appropriate mechanisms for doing so.

We may ask for your consent for processing certain types of personal data. This includes use of software for tracking human resources and login data. In these circumstances, you will be fully informed as to the personal data we wish to process and the reason for the processing.

You may choose to provide or withhold your consent within the software itself. Once consent is provided, you can withdraw consent at any time.

You are required to comply with all Company policies and procedures in relation to processing data. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

GENERAL

Employees are strictly prohibited from reporting to work and engaging in work while impaired by drugs, alcohol or other substances (including cannabis) which may cause impairment.

The use, possession, transfer, or sale of any illegal substance on our premises or in any parking lot or work site is strictly prohibited.

However, if any employee requires accommodation due to a disability (such as substance abuse issues) or as a result of being prescribed medically required drugs (including cannabis), the worker should immediately report his or her condition to management in confidence.

DEFINITIONS

"Impairment" or "being impaired" means that an employee's normal physical or mental abilities, or faculties, while at work have been detrimentally affected by the use of substances (legal or illegal, including cannabis) as determined by the Organization in its sole discretion. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, "impairment" includes the inability to perform work duties safely, competently, or efficiently.

APPLICATION

Any employee who reports for work impaired will not be allowed to work and any worker who is found to be impaired while working will not be allowed to continue working. If, in the opinion of management, the employee is considered impaired, the employee shall be sent home by taxi or another safe means of transportation. An impaired employee shall not be allowed to drive under any circumstances.

Subject to any overriding obligations at law (such as a duty to accommodate a disability), any employee who violates this policy by either reporting to work impaired, becoming impaired at work or working while impaired is guilty of serious workplace misconduct and can be subject to severe disciplinary action including immediate dismissal for cause.

The Organization recognizes that an addiction to drugs, alcohol, or other illegal substances can qualify as a "disability" for purposes of human rights legislation and will accommodate any disability up to the point of undue hardship.

Internet and Email Policy

GENERAL

The Organization owns and controls all workplace technology and information technology resources and systems. If applicable, each employee has a responsibility to use workplace information technology resources and systems in a manner that is consistent with the objectives of their employment.

Employees should have no expectation of privacy regarding any information or data that is received, stored, or transmitted via workplace technology and information technology resources and systems. In addition, employees have no ownership or proprietary interest in any information or data that is received by, stored on, or transmitted with any workplace technology or information technology resources and systems.

Information technology resources and systems refer to the following non-exhaustive list:

- Personal computers and workstations;
- Internal office instant messenger;
- Laptop computers;
- Data storage devices;
- Computer hardware;
- Peripheral equipment, such as printers, modems, fax machines and copiers;
- Computer software applications and associated files and data, including software that grants access to external services such as the Internet;
- Electronic mail (email);
- Cellular telephones and pagers;
- Personal digital assistants and smartphones; and,
- Voicemail systems.

Except as provided in this policy, the use of information technology resources and systems is strictly limited to work-related purposes. Non-organizational personal use is strictly prohibited.

Any attempt to degrade the performance of a computer system or network or to deprive authorized personnel of resources or access to any of our computer or network is prohibited and will result in discipline up to and including dismissal.

INAPPROPRIATE USE OF I.T. RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS

Inappropriate use of information technology resources and systems includes but is not limited to the following:

- Illegal activity, including breach of copyright laws;
- Accessing inappropriate websites, including but not limited to sites containing pornographic and hate literature;
- Online gambling or other game playing:
- Using technology to harass, discriminate or make defamatory, slanderous or libellous statements (e.g. sexually explicit or racial messages and/or jokes);

- Online shopping or bidding on online auctions;
- Accessing chat rooms and instant messaging;
- Flooding or spamming;
- Downloading, installing or using unlicensed software;
- Signing guest books, newsgroups or bulletin boards; and,
- Conducting personal business, such as online banking.

EMAIL USE

The use of email is reserved primarily for organizational use. Limited personal use of email is permissible if such use is reasonable and not in contravention of this policy with respect to inappropriate use of information technology resources and systems. Even when used for limited personal use, the content of any email communication sent, received or stored remains the property of the Organization at all times.

Smoke-free Workplace Policy

GENERAL

The Organization is committed to creating a safe, healthy, and comfortable workplace for all its employees and visitors. The Smoke-Free Workplace Policy (the "Policy") sets out the Organization's prohibition on smoking in the workplace and assists the Organization in complying with the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017*.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees of the Organization.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy,

- "Smoking" means:
 - Inhaling and exhaling or holding lighted tobacco or cannabis (medical or recreational); and
 - Inhaling and exhaling the vapor produced by an electronic cigarette or similar device, whether or not the vapour contains nicotine.
- "Workplace" includes but is not limited to:
 - All company-controlled premises, including but not limited to offices, meeting rooms, waiting rooms, washrooms, lounges, dining rooms, and immediate surrounding areas; and,
 - All non-company-controlled premises where an employee is performing work for, and on behalf of, the organization.

POLICY STATEMENT

Smoking in the workplace is strictly prohibited. All employees and visitors must comply with and support the Policy.

Appropriate "no-smoking" signs will be clearly displayed in the workplace.

CONTRAVENTIONS OF THE POLICY

Repeated contraventions of the Policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Social Media Policy

GENERAL

The Organization recognizes that social media use is widespread and that employees use social media to communicate and interact with others. The Social Media Policy (the "Policy") is intended to safeguard our brand's reputation and encourage employees to use social media responsibly by setting out expectations around proper online conduct.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees of the Organization.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy,

- "Social Media" means forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content; includes but is not limited to LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and any other similar means of communication.
- "Use" Includes posting content or viewing the posts of others, sending/reading messages, watching videos, and any other similar use by means of computer, mobile phone, or any other device.
- "Sensitive, Private, or Confidential Organization Information" means Information, knowledge, or data of any nature and in any form relating to the past, current, or prospective Organization or operations of the Organization that, at the time(s) concerned, is non-public information.

POLICY STATEMENT

Employees are prohibited from using social media during working hours and may only do so during their approved breaks or unless otherwise authorized by their manager.

When using social media (whether during approved breaks or outside of work), employees must conduct themselves in accordance with the following rules and expectations:

- Be aware that others will associate you with your employer when you identify yourself as such.
- Do not post or share comments about a co-worker, client, or contractor/vendor that could be perceived as offensive, harassing, threatening, retaliatory, or discriminatory.
- Do not post or share sensitive, private, or confidential Organizational information.
- Do not express opinions which claim to be the opinion of the Organization. Any
 personal blogs should contain a disclaimer that the views expressed on it are
 personal views of the author only.
- Do not post or share comments representing your own views about the Organization.
- Do not upload photographs to social networking sites of yourself or any other employee taken in a work situation or in a work uniform.
- Do not "friend" a parent of a child in care.
- Respect client privacy. Never give out personal client information.

- Ensure that you are always complying with your employment contract, Employee Handbook, and all other policies of the Organization.
- Even if you act with the best intentions, remember that anything you put on social media can potentially harm the Organization.
- Always respect others. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in our workplace. Show proper consideration for the privacy of others and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory (like religion or politics).
- You may be legally responsible for the content you post, so respect brands, trademarks, and copyrights. Remember that social media sites and applications have access to and control over everything you have disclosed to or on that site or application. Any information might be turned over to law enforcement without your consent or knowledge.
- Use strict privacy settings on all social network profiles.
- Always exercise caution and common sense. If you are unsure whether a post is appropriate, speak to your manager.
- If you accidentally put the Organization's reputation at risk, or if you fall prey to an online attack, inform your manager immediately.

MONITORING INTERNET USAGE

The Organization may monitor your internet usage regularly and may undertake more indepth monitoring where considered necessary. This includes monitoring the websites you visit, and any other matters referred to in this Policy.

CONTRAVENTIONS OF THE POLICY

Contraventions of the Policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Personal Electronic Device Use Policy

GENERAL

The Organization recognizes that employees may need their personal electronic device to communicate with family or friends or to obtain information on non-company matters while at work. Use of these devices in the workplace during working hours can interfere with employee productivity and be a distraction in the workplace. The Personal Electronic Device Use Policy (the "Policy") sets out expectations around the use of personal electronic devices by any employee during working hours.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees of the Organization.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy,

- "Emergency" means a serious situation that requires immediate attention.
- "Personal electronic device" means any device that makes or receives telephone
 calls or emails, leaves voice messages, sends text messages, selects music,
 checks social media, or surfs the internet; includes cell phones, tablets, laptops,
 computers, or any similar electronic device.
- "Use" includes checking/sending texts or emails, answering/making phone calls, checking social media, surfing the internet, playing games, listening to music, or any other use.

POLICY STATEMENT

Employees are prohibited from using their personal electronic devices during working hours, unless they have received prior permission from their manager or in the event of an emergency. Personal electronic devices may only be used during approved breaks.

Employees are encouraged to ensure that their family and friends are aware of this Policy.

CONTRAVENTIONS OF THE POLICY

Repeated contraventions of the Policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Company Equipment Policy

PURPOSE

The Organization provides employees with company equipment required to perform their job. The Company Equipment Policy (the "Policy") ensures proper care and accountability in handling company equipment.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees of the Organization who have been provided with company equipment.

OWNERSHIP OF EQUIPMENT

All equipment issued to employees remains the property of the Organization.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees who are issued equipment by the Organization are responsible for the following:

- Safekeeping and properly caring for the equipment;
- Limiting use of the equipment to themselves;
- Limiting their use to work-related purposes for which the equipment was assigned, except when otherwise directed by management;
- Promptly reporting to their manager any loss of, damage to, or unserviceable condition of any equipment;
- Not attempting to repair any damaged or malfunctioning equipment without prior approval of a manager (unless it is part of their job);
- Not discarding or selling damaged or malfunctioning equipment without management written approval; and,
- Securing equipment during transit.

LOSS/THEFT OF EQUIPMENT

Lost or stolen equipment must be immediately reported to management. If the equipment is stolen outside the Organization's premises, the employee must also report it to the police.

INTENTIONAL DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT

Intentionally damaging company equipment (including the hardware or software) in any way may result in the loss of privileges and/or other discipline up to and including dismissal.

The Organization reserves the right to recover expenditures associated with intentional damage to equipment, in accordance with applicable laws.

An employee may voluntarily reimburse the Organization for damaged equipment, which may be considered a mitigating factor in determining the extent of disciplinary action.

CONTRAVENTIONS OF THE POLICY

Contraventions of the Policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Termination of Employment

GENERAL

Terminations are to be treated in a confidential, professional manner by all involved. Upon termination, employees are entitled to receive all earned pay and/or commissions and vacation pay.

MANNERS OF DISMISSAL

The types of terminations of employment are included in each employee's individual employment agreement.

Reference to just cause in the employment agreement includes:

- A material breach of the employee's employment agreement or the Organization's employment policies;
- Unacceptable performance;
- Theft, dishonesty or falsifying records, including providing false information as part of an application for employment;
- Intentional destruction, improper use or abuse of our property;
- Violence in the workplace;
- Obscene conduct at our premises or during company-related functions elsewhere;
- Harassment of co-workers, supervisors, managers, clients, suppliers or other individuals associated with the Organization;
- Insubordination or wilful refusal to take directions;
- Intoxication or impairment in the workplace;
- Repeated, unwarranted, and wilful lateness, absenteeism or failure to report to work; and,
- Personal conduct that prejudices the Organization's reputation, services, or morale.

Upon termination for cause, the employee shall be provided with a written summary of the reasons(s) for dismissal.

EMPLOYER PROPERTY

Upon the end of employment for any reason, an employee shall return all items of any kind created or used pursuant to the employee's service or furnished by us, including but not limited to computers, mobile devices, reports, files, diskettes, manuals, literature, confidential information, or other materials, which shall remain and be considered the exclusive property of the Organization.

Schedule "A": Employee Acknowledgement Form

I confirm that I have received and had an opportunity to read a copy of the Employee Handbook. I acknowledge that I understand all the rules, policies, terms and conditions contained in the policy and that failure to abide by the aforesaid, rules, policies, terms and conditions may result in discipline up to and including the termination of my employment for just cause.

I further acknowledge that the Organization reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to revoke, change or supplement any of the rules, policies, terms and conditions contained in its Employee Handbook at any time without notice to me.

Employee Name:	
Employee Signature:	
Date:	



Vacation request form

Scan OR Code to download the form



Statutory Leave Notice Form

Scan QR Code to **download** the form



Non-Statutory Leave Form

Scan QR Code to ${\bf download}$ the form



Employee Onboarding Form

Scan QR Code to download the form