



OKLAHOMA
Dept. of Agriculture,
Food and Forestry

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry

Employee Handbook

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry
Employee Handbook

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Section 1 - Receipt and Acknowledgement

Please read the following statements and sign below to acknowledge your electronic access to the Employee Handbook. If you do not have electronic access to the Employee Handbook, you may request a printed copy. This Employee Handbook replaces (supersedes) all other previous manuals of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF). The guidelines, rules, and benefits described within are subject to change at the sole discretion of ODAFF at any time. While ODAFF will attempt to communicate any significant change in policy to employees, it is the responsibility of the employee to maintain a current understanding of ODAFF employment policies. A copy of this receipt will be maintained as part of the employee's personnel file.

✓ I have electronic access to or have received a printed copy of the ODAFF Employee Handbook and I am responsible for reading it. I understand that the guidelines, rules, and benefits described in this booklet are for informational purposes and are not intended to replace the Merit Rules, State law or Federal law.

✓ ODAFF employees may be entrusted with confidential information. It is, therefore, imperative that employees maintain confidentiality of specific information and understand that employment with the ODAFF assumes an obligation to maintain confidentiality, even after an employee leaves the Agency. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in appropriate disciplinary or other action.

✓ I have entered into employment with ODAFF voluntarily and acknowledge that it is for no specified length of time. Accordingly, either I or ODAFF may terminate the relationship at will, with or without cause, at any time, for any reason or no reason. I understand that these policies or any other ODAFF policy, practice, or procedure is not intended to provide any contractual obligations related to continued employment, compensation, or employment contract.

Employee's Printed Name

Job Title

Employee's Signature

Date

Section 2 - ODAFF Policies

2.1 ODAFF Employment Policies

ODAFF's employment policies are extremely important to preserve courteous, mutually respectful, pleasant, non-coercive interactions between employees, management, and patrons. Employees are expected to comply with all ODAFF employment policies. Supervisors are expected to comply with and enforce all ODAFF employment policies. Employees and supervisors may be disciplined for failure to comply with or enforce ODAFF employment policies.

2.2 Standard Operating Procedures / Safety Protocols

Some divisions within ODAFF have standard operating procedures or safety protocols that are unique to the division and the work performed by division employees. Employees are required to comply with a division's standard operating procedures or safety protocols in addition to ODAFF's employment policies. Divisions will provide sufficient training or written guidelines establishing applicable standard operating procedures or safety protocols applicable to the employee.

Section 3 - Work Schedule and Leave

3.1 Work Schedule

Supervisors will set employee work schedules. Employees are expected to work their scheduled hours. Unexplained or excessive absences or tardiness may be grounds for disciplinary action including termination.

3.2 Assigned Duty Station

Each employee will be assigned a duty station. Employees shall be present at their assigned duty station or some other location as directed by his or her supervisor during the employees' work schedule. The assigned duty station may be a generally described geographic area or multiple locations to be visited during a particular day. Assigned duty stations may be modified by supervisors as needed.

3.3 Teleworking

"Teleworking" means the employee performs assigned work remotely by electronic communication while the employee is not physically present at an assigned duty station. "Teleworking" does not include field work or work performed while traveling on ODAFF business. Division directors may permit an employee to telework on a temporary basis if circumstances prevent the employee from being present at his or her assigned duty station during the employee's work schedule.

3.4 Timekeeping

Employees shall honestly and accurately report hours worked using ODAFF's electronic time-keeping system. Employees shall report hours worked at least once each week at a date and time established by the employee's supervisor. Failure to timely and accurately report hours worked in the manner prescribed by ODAFF may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Supervisor's may require that the employee provide additional information concerning hours worked directly to the supervisor, including but not limited to, start and stop times, locations, activity summaries, projects worked, or other reports.

3.5 Leave

Employees are permitted time off from their work schedule for a variety of reasons.

Section 4 - Performance Management Process

The performance of each employee shall be evaluated annually by the employee's immediate supervisor. The annual evaluation is called the Performance Management Process (PMP). The PMP is required by the Oklahoma Personnel Act, [74 O.S. § 840-4.17](#), and [Merit Rules, OAC 260:25-17-31](#), for most state employees. The Commissioner of Agriculture, the Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture, and Executive Secretary are the only ODAFF employees not subject to the PMP requirement.

At the beginning of the annual evaluation period, supervisors will identify and communicate five to nine “accountabilities and behaviors” upon which an employee will be evaluated. A statement of accountability shall include a job task and a measurable performance standard. During the annual evaluation period, the immediate supervisor shall conduct a mid-term interview with the employee and discuss the progress of the employee in meeting the accountabilities and behaviors upon which the employee is being evaluated and identify performance strengths and areas for development. The annual evaluation shall conclude with a final interview where the immediate supervisor will provide the employee with a copy of the employee evaluation.

In addition to specific accountabilities and behaviors, employees will be evaluated in the areas of customer service, teamwork, problem solving initiative, observing work hours and using leave, and leadership (if applicable). The accountability rating and behavior rating will be combined to determine an overall performance rating. The employee shall be given the opportunity to submit written comments regarding the performance evaluation.

Each employee in probationary status shall be rated at least thirty (30) days prior to the end of the probationary period. All employees not otherwise exempt from this requirement shall have an evaluation period of no more than twelve months. Supervisors may perform as many additional evaluations as they deem necessary in order to effectively manage the performance of a subordinate. ODAFF shall retain a copy of PMPs for each employee.

Section 5 - Code of Conduct

5.1 Code of Conduct

ODAFF has several policies concerning employee conduct. Employees are expected to follow all ODAFF policies in the performance of their duties. Employees who violate any ODAFF policy are subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

5.2 Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace

ODAFF is a drug and alcohol free workplace. All agency employees are prohibited from unlawfully manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing, using, or being under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol during scheduled work hours, while operating a State vehicle, or on State property.

5.3 Tobacco Free Workplace

The purpose of this policy is to eliminate all tobacco use (including e-cigarettes or vaping devices), whether located indoors or outdoors on property owned, leased, or contracted for use by ODAFF, and in state vehicles.

5.4 Computer and Cell Phone Usage

ODAFF computers, cellular telephones, or other electronic devices may be provided to employees for job-related activities. Employees who are given access to computers for job-related duties must be in compliance with state and agency policies, as well as all state and federal laws governing usage and communication of information.

5.5 Dress Code

ODAFF employees are expected to wear clothing that is appropriate for their job and work site. Clothing and appearance should be neat, clean, in good business taste and shall not constitute a safety hazard. ODAFF is a professional organization that interfaces with other state agencies and the business community. Employees shall project a professional public image. Accordingly, supervisors may request that employees cover offensive tattoos, remove excessive or offensive jewelry, change unprofessional clothing, or make such other reasonable changes to maintain a professional appearance. Any disagreement between employees and supervisors on the subject of the dress code shall be resolved by the division director. Repeated or egregious violations of the dress code may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

5.6 Relatives

If an employee and members of the employee's immediate family are employed by ODAFF, the family members may not report to the same supervisor or within the same chain of command. Immediate family is defined as spouse, children, parents, brothers, sisters, and includes step, grand, half, foster, or in-law relationships. Exceptions to these policies may be made by the Commissioner of Agriculture.

5.7 Compliance with State Income Tax Laws

Pursuant to [68 O.S. § 238.2](#), any employee who receives a third notification of non-compliance with state income tax laws from the Oklahoma Tax Commission shall be terminated.

5.8 Discrimination and Harassment

ODAFF prohibits unlawful discrimination and harassment of any type.

5.9 Equal Employment Opportunities

ODAFF provides equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants, without regard to political or religious opinions or affiliations, race, creed, gender, color, age or national origin or by reason of any handicap, or any other reason prohibited by law.

5.10 Workplace Violence

ODAFF maintains a safe and secure workplace free from violence, harassment, intimidation, bullying, and other disruptive behavior. ODAFF prohibits violence or threats of violence.

5.11 Whistleblower Protections

Employees that report fraud, waste, or abuse at ODAFF are protected from discrimination, retaliation, or other illegal treatment.

[Oklahoma Whistleblower Act](#)
[U.S. Department of Labor / Whistleblower Protection Programs](#)

Section 6 - Progressive Discipline

Progressive discipline is a system designed to ensure not only the consistency, impartiality and predictability of discipline, but also the flexibility to vary penalties if justified by aggravating or mitigating conditions. Typically, penalties range from verbal warning to discharge, with intermediate levels of a written warning, suspension, or demotion. Absent mitigating circumstances, repetition of an offense is accompanied by a generally automatic progression to the next higher level of discipline.

Each supervisor shall be responsible for applying discipline when necessary that is progressive in nature, appropriate for the offense, and equitable. Each supervisor shall consider aggravating or mitigating circumstances when determining the proper disciplinary action. Each supervisor shall use prompt, positive action to avoid more serious disciplinary actions.

ODAFF shall apply the progressive discipline policy to employees. The application of progressive discipline does not obligate ODAFF to continue the employment of any employee unless otherwise specified.

Section 8 - Compensation

ODAFF may hire employees for specific periods of time or for the completion of a specific project. Temporary employees may work no more than 1000 hours per 12-month period. Temporary employees are not eligible to receive benefits and shall have no right or expectation of continued employment.

ODAFF may hire other employees by entering contracts with individuals or organizations. The details of the contract will specify the length of service, the scope of employment, and other important criteria.

Unless specifically excluded by the terms of an employee contract, all temporary or contract employees are required to comply with the employment policies of ODAFF.

8.1 Payday

ODAFF operates on a bi-weekly pay schedule. Paychecks are directly deposited to the checking or savings account specified by the employee. If the regularly scheduled payday falls on a weekend or holiday, payday is on the last business day before the weekend or holiday.

8.2 Direct Deposit

Employees are required to participate in the direct deposit system. The direct deposit system permits ODAFF to directly deposit paychecks into a bank account designated by the employee. Employees are responsible for updating their banking information.

8.3 Mandatory Deductions from Paycheck

ODAFF is required by law to make certain deductions from an employee's paycheck. Federal, state, and local income taxes, an employee's contribution to Social Security, and state retirement shall be deducted. Deductions are itemized on each earnings statement. The amount of the deductions may depend on the employee's earnings and upon the information furnished on the employee's W-4 form regarding the number of dependents or exemptions claimed. Any change in name, address, telephone number, marital status or number of exemptions must be reported to the Finance Division, Payroll Processing immediately to ensure proper credit for tax purposes. The W-2 form employees receive each year indicates precisely how much of an employee's earnings were deducted for these purposes. Any other mandatory deductions, such as court-ordered deductions, will be explained whenever ODAFF is ordered to make such deductions.

Employees may review earnings statements and deductions through features provided in the ODAFF electronic time keeping system.

8.4 Other Deductions

Employees may elect to participate in a variety of approved supplemental programs through voluntary payroll deductions. Additionally, employees may request that ODAFF make additional authorized deductions from paychecks to an account at a participating bank or credit union.

8.5 Repayment of Overpayment Errors

Every effort is made to avoid errors in each employee's paycheck. If an employee believes that an error has been made, the employee should notify the Payroll department immediately. The payroll department will research the problem and make any necessary corrections promptly. Overpayments to an employee may be deducted from current wages pursuant to state law.

8.6 Longevity Pay

The State of Oklahoma offers longevity pay on the basis of length of service to qualified employees.

8.7 Pay upon Termination

While there are some exceptions, including but not limited to a reduction in force or offer of early retirement, ODAFF does not generally provide severance pay. When an employee leaves ODAFF, the employee will be paid for actual time worked, plus any accrued but unused annual leave time as allowed by state law.

8.8 Unemployment Compensation

Unemployment compensation benefits are available when employment is terminated under qualifying conditions.

Section 9 - Benefit Programs

9.1 Health Insurance and Other Benefits

A paycheck is just part of an employee's total compensation package. ODAFF employees also have access to a number of outstanding benefits including health insurance, dental, vision, reimbursement accounts, disability insurance, and retirement.

9.2 Premium Conversion

By electing premium conversion, employees may pay for mandatory and optional coverage before taxes thus lowering their taxable income. All insurance coverage may be pre-taxed with the exception of dependent life insurance and a portion of the employee supplemental life insurance. More information is available through the Employee Benefits Department.

9.3 Flexible Spending

Health care and dependent care accounts offer significant tax savings by allowing an employee to set aside money out of each paycheck before it is taxed to pay for planned expenses such as medical deductibles and child care expenses. These accounts are optional and may be elected during annual option period. Account funds not spent during the designated plan year are forfeited.

9.4 OKThrive

The OKThrive website features sections dedicated to weight management, fitness, nutrition, stress management, and an FAQ that answers questions about OKThrive. The website provides all state employees a personal webpage with a dashboard that charts progress towards attaining nutrition and fitness goals. The site also contains educational materials, articles, and blogs that meet a wide variety of wellness interests and needs.

9.5 Health Insurance upon Separation

The Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act (COBRA) of 1985 is federal legislation that provides all employees and their dependents who are enrolled in the health or dental insurance program, the opportunity to temporarily continue such coverage in the event of the employee's termination (except for gross misconduct), death, divorce or separation, or when an enrolled child no longer qualifies as an eligible dependent under that program.

9.6 Workers Compensation Insurance

ODAFF carries workers compensation insurance for the benefit of its employees. All work related employee injuries must be reported to Human Resources immediately. Workers compensation claims shall be handled in a manner consistent with state law.

9.7 Disability Insurance

Disability insurance is part of the mandatory core benefits package and is available to all employees that have completed at least one month of continuous service. Short and long term disability insurance is provided to employees when off work more than 30 days due to a qualifying event. Any short term disability benefits will be offset or reduced by other benefits or payments received, e.g., holiday pay, sick and annual leave, shared leave, etc. Disability coverage pays an amount equal to a percentage of the employee's base salary up to a maximum dollar amount. Disability benefits are subject to all applicable state and federal taxes.

9.8 Oklahoma Retirement

A retirement plan is provided for the purpose of providing lifetime benefits in recognition of service to the state. All eligible employees must participate in select retirement plans. Details concerning eligibility and various retirement programs are available in Human Resources.

9.9 Disability Retirement

Employees who must terminate employment due to health problems may qualify for disability retirement benefits. Employees who have eight years of creditable service toward retirement and an award letter from the Social Security Administration certifying them for disability benefits are eligible, provided a) the date of disability established by the Social Security Administration falls within one year of the employee's last date physically on the job, and b) the employee must have been an active regularly-scheduled employee with a participating employer at the time of disability.

9.10 Unemployment Insurance

ODAFF carries unemployment insurance for the benefit of its employees. Unemployment claims shall be handled in a manner consistent with state law.

Section 10 - Career and Personal Enhancement

10.1 Education and Training

ODAFF may arrange for employees to attend both formal and informal training programs. Employees are regularly selected to attend workshops or training programs offered by the state to enhance their abilities and performance. Employees will receive a normal paycheck while attending these schools or workshops. If an employee becomes aware of a particular seminar or workshop that the employee believes is appropriate for enhancing job performance, the employee should bring it to the attention of a supervisor or division director.

Employees shall obtain the prior approval of a supervisor or division director approval before enrolling in any training course. Supervisors may approve requests to attend training courses provided by ODAFF. Supervisors may attend State approved HRDS courses. Only division directors may approve requests to attend training courses not provided by ODAFF.

All supervisory staff members at ODAFF are required to attend twelve (12) hours of training per calendar year in courses related to their effective performance. New supervisors are required to complete twenty-four (24) hours of training in their first year.

10.2 Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a program offering employees an opportunity to seek professional services in resolving personal problems. The EAP is designed to assist employees in identifying problems and exploring alternatives that can help address the needs of the employees and their family members. The employee's participation in the EAP is voluntary and in no way will affect his or her employment. Asking for assistance does not mean that the employee is obligated to accept or continue it.

ODAFF may request an employee consult with an EAP professional without loss of pay or accumulated leave. However, an employee shall request sick or annual leave when voluntarily consulting with an EAP professional.

Employees may contact the Employee Assistance Coordinator at 909 South Meridian, Suite 525, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73108, or at (405) 947-7576.

Section 11 - Workplace Safety

11.1 Workplace Safety

ODAFF promotes a safe working environment for its employees through an in-house safety program. If, at any time, an employee sees an unsafe working situation or is injured at work, the employee should immediately report it to a supervisor. Federal law requires that the ODAFF keep records of all illnesses and accidents that occur during the workday. If an employee is injured or becomes ill, the employee should contact his or her supervisor for assistance. OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) also provides for an employee's right to know about any known health hazards which are present on the job.

Some divisions within ODAFF have standard operating procedures or safety protocols that are unique to the division and the work performed by division employees. Employees are required to comply with a division's standard operating procedures or safety protocols in addition to ODAFF's employment policies. Divisions will provide sufficient training or written guidelines establishing applicable standard operating procedures or safety protocols applicable to the employee.

Employees and supervisors should use the Incident Report Form to report any unusual or unexpected accidents or incidents that occur at work. These incidents may include, but are not limited to, falls, cuts, drug reactions, auto accidents, laboratory errors, or allegations of inappropriate behavior by an employee, client, visitor or contractor. The Incident Report Form should be completed as soon as possible following an incident, but no later than seven working days following the incident. If necessary, a second sheet should be attached to provide complete details about the incident. A copy should be sent to Human Resources, supervisor, and to the person involved in the incident.

Section 12 - Travel Policy

12.1 Travel Policy

Employees are sometimes required to travel for various purposes including but not limited to training and promoting the interests of ODAFF. In-state travel of all types shall be approved at the discretion of the employee's Division Director or designee. Out-of-state travel involving an overnight stay shall be approved at the discretion of the Commissioner or designee. All travel shall be conducted in a manner that is consistent with ODAFF policies.

12.2 Travel Expense Reimbursement

Travel expenses for ODAFF employees who are required to travel in the course of their employment are reimbursed under the provisions of the Oklahoma Travel Reimbursement Act. If an employee has questions concerning travel reimbursement, the employee is encouraged to seek clarification before incurring any personal expense. The Administrative Division can answer specific questions about travel expense reimbursement.

Section 13 - Vehicle Use / Fleet Management

13.1 Vehicle Use / Fleet Management

Employees may be assigned a vehicle on a temporary or permanent basis for work related activities. Employees shall use state-owned vehicles in a manner consistent with ODAFF policies.

Section 14 - Miscellaneous Provisions

14.1 Charitable Contributions

All employees, other than temporary employees, can contribute through payroll deductions to a variety of fully accountable private nonprofit, social, health, and welfare charitable organizations.

14.2 Disclosure of Personal Information

ODAFF may keep personnel records confidential which relate to internal personnel investigations or where disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

No employee will disclose confidential records or information which would constitute an invasion of a current or former employee's personal privacy. The home addresses, home telephone numbers, social security numbers, and information related to personal electronic communication devices of current and former employees will not be open to public inspection or disclosure without written permission from the current or former employee or without an order from a court of competent jurisdiction.

14.3 ID Cards

An employee's photo-ID is the property of ODAFF and should be kept in a secure manner. Upon the termination of employment, employees are expected to return any ID cards, key(s), and other supplies, equipment, and state property issued before receiving a final paycheck. Notify your supervisor immediately if the any state property is lost or stolen.