

Category: 300

Number: 328

Subject: **OFFICE RELATIONSHIPS**

1. **PURPOSE:** It is the purpose of this policy to provide all employees of the County of Saginaw with the County's expectations and policy concerning an employee's close personal relationships with another County employee, and to also advise County employees of the potential consequences of, and discipline which may result from, close personal relationships. This policy is to avoid undue litigation or claims of a hostile work environment.
2. **AUTHORITY:** The Saginaw County Board of Commissioners.
3. **APPLICATION:** The rules and regulations set forth herein apply to all employees (including full time, part time, temporary, and seasonal), elected officials, and volunteers of the County of Saginaw and contractual workers.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** The Controller/CAO shall be responsible for the implementation of this policy. Department Heads and Elected Officials are responsible for the administration of this policy. It is the responsibility of every employee to abide by this policy.
5. **DEFINITIONS:**
  - 5.1 **Close Personal Relationships:** Includes, but is not limited to, dating, short or long-term sexual relationships, and any other conduct or behavior generally associated with romantic or sexual relationships.
  - 5.2 **Supervisor:** Any individual who oversees the day-to-day performance and other activities of employees. This includes but is not limited to recommending or taking action on:
    - 5.2.1 Hiring, promoting, transferring, demoting or re-assignment;
    - 5.2.2 Initiating an internal investigation or discipline;
    - 5.2.3 Assigning or directing work;
    - 5.2.4 Evaluating performance;
    - 5.2.5 Approving overtime, paid time off (PTO), or leave time; and
    - 5.2.6 Granting reimbursement for work expenses.

A supervisor does not have to be the immediate supervisor of the subordinate employee, but may be in another division or department and may be one or more levels above the subordinate's immediate supervisor.

6. POLICY:

6.1 Restrictions on Employee Conduct. The County of Saginaw prohibits all close personal relationships between supervisors and subordinates. Close personal relationships among all other employees are strongly discouraged. Close personal relationships can interrupt the office environment and adversely influence job performance. Close personal relationships are especially serious when one person has a position of supervisory authority over the other person in the workplace. The expectations of this policy apply regardless of gender and sexual orientation.

6.1.1 The intentions of this policy are to not discourage or prohibit friendships between supervisors and subordinates and between other employees that are handled in a professional manner.

6.1.2. Any unwanted sexual attention, including physical contact, and sexually oriented behavior with the purpose or effect of creating an offensive and/or hostile work environment is strictly prohibited. Any employee who feels that he or she is subject to this kind of behavior is to reference the County of Saginaw's Harassment and Discrimination Policy.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:

7.1 Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships: All romantic or sexual personal relationships between a supervisor and a subordinate must be reported in writing by the supervisor and subordinate to the head of the department(s), or the next person in the chain of command if the supervisor in the relationship is the head of the department, and the Personnel Department. (If the supervisor/department head is an Elected Official, the relationship must be reported in writing to the Board Chair and the Controller/CAO. If the supervisor is a Judge, the relationship must be reported in writing to the Chief Judge, with notice being provided to the Personnel Department.)

7.1.1 If the supervisor/department head is an Elected Official or a Judge, then either the Board Chair or the Chief Judge will evaluate and investigate the matter and take action to address and resolve any actual or potential conflict of interest, impropriety or impact on job performance or the work environment created by the relationship.

7.1.2 With the exception of the procedure outlined in 7.1.1 above, once reported, the department head(s) or next in chain of command and Personnel Department must evaluate and investigate the matter and take action to address and resolve any actual or potential conflict of interest, impropriety, or impact on job performance or the work environment created by the relationship. Such action may include but not be limited to transfer, reassignment or demotion, suspension, or termination. The involved supervisor is prohibited from having any impact on decisions

pertaining to the subordinate employee's employment, job performance, work environment, evaluations, discipline, or advancement.

- 7.2 Non-Supervisory Employee Relationships: All close personal relationships between two employees who are not each other's supervisors must be reported in writing to their immediate supervisor(s) or head of the department(s). The head of the department(s) must investigate the report to see if the relationship impacts job performance or work environment. This includes the impact on both employees involved in the close personal relationship and on other County employees. If it is determined that the relationship does impact the overall office environment or job performance, the department head(s) must take appropriate action to mitigate and/or remedy any actual or potential consequences of the close personal relationship. Such action may include but not be limited to switching work hours or a transfer of department or position.
- 7.3 With the exception of the procedure outlined in 7.1.1 above, if transfer or termination is determined to be necessary, individuals involved in the relationship may be given the opportunity to decide which employee in the relationship will receive a change in employment status. Saginaw County reserves the right to decide which employee receives a change in employment status if such change is found necessary.
- 7.3.1 An employee who feels any action is unfair may appeal it by using the appropriate grievance procedure.
- 7.4 With the exception of the procedure outlined in 7.1.1 above, failure to comply with the requirements of this policy or to make required disclosures can result in discipline up to and including termination of employment.
8. CONTROLLER/CAO LEGAL COUNSEL REVIEW: The Controller/CAO has determined that this policy as submitted to the Board of Commissioners contains the necessary substance in order to carry out the purpose of the policy. County Civil Counsel has determined that this policy as submitted contains content that appears to be legal activities of the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners.

Approved as to Substance:  
Saginaw County Controller/CAO

Approved as to Legal Content:  
Saginaw County Civil Counsel

ADOPTED: May 17, 2022