

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



175 Union Street
Waterbury, CT 06706
(860) 632-1485
www.ctserc.org

Table of Contents

A Message from the SERC Executive Director	5
INTRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION	6
Establishment of SERC as a Quasi-Public Agency	7
Equity, Excellence, Education: SERC's Presence in CT	7
SERC's Influences	#
Mission, Vision, Beliefs, and Values	8
EMPLOYMENT	9
Organizational Structure	
Nature of Employment	9
Employee Classification Categories	9
Exempt	10
Non-exempt	10
Full-time	11
Part-time	11
Temporary	11
Compliance with Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986	11
Hours of Work	12
Inclement Weather	12
Payday	12
Employee and Medical Files	10
Job Descriptions	10
Position Openings and the Application Process	10
References and Reference Checks	11
Background and Reference Checks as a Part of the Hiring Process	13
Employment and Financial References	14
Professional References	14
Initial On-Boarding Meeting	11

On-Boarding Period	11
Open Door	12
Exit Interview	15
Off-Boarding	15
Anti-Nepotism	15
Disclosure of Criminal History	15
Social Media	16
DIVERSITY AND EQUITY	16
Equal Employment Opportunity	16
Affirmative Action/Title IX	16
Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA)	17
Anti-Harassment and Sexual Harassment Prevention	17
Anti-Harassment	18
Sexual Harassment Prevention	18
Examples of Harassing Sexual Behavior	19
Other Forms of Prohibited Harassment	20
Workplace Diversity and Inclusion	20
WORKPLACE SAFETY	19
Safety Concerns	19
Emergency Disaster Guidelines for All SERC Sites	19
Accidents and Illnesses in the Workplace	19
Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace	19
Smoke-Free Workplace	20
Workplace Threats and Violence	20
Visitors in the Workplace	20
WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS	21
Whistleblower Protection	23
Confidentiality	21

Data Breach Service	21	
Employee Data Changes	10	
Copyright Infringement	21	
Conflicts of Interest	22	
Conflicts of Interest	25	
Outside Business Interests	25	
Illegal Activities		
Customer Service	22	
Professionalism and Being Part of the SERC Team	22	
Professional Learning and Development	23	
Attendance and Punctuality	23	
Performance Evaluation	12	
Procedural Safeguards and Employee Protections in Performance Evaluation		27
Performance Improvement	13	
Disciplinary Intervention	13	
Procedural Safeguards and Employee Protections in Disciplinary Intervention	28	
Corrective Action	28	
Separation of Employment, Exit Interview and Off-boarding		
Absences/Unauthorized Absences	23	
Authorization for Repayment of Advanced Time-Off	29	
Medical Release to Return to Work	30	
Consecutive Unauthorized Days of Absence	30	
Personal Appearance/Dress Code	24	
Use of Agency Property	25	
Care in Use	31	
Return of Agency Property	32	
Electronic and Telephonic Communications	26	
Logos and Trademarks	26	
Document Retention	27	
Posting of Materials	27	

Employee Suggestions	27
Personal Use of Agency Equipment and Supplies	33
Office Security	34
COMPENSATION	28
Hours of Work	28
Flexible Working Hours (Flextime)	28
Work from Home	28
Paydays/Compensation Schedule	29
Pay Raises	29
Timecards	29
Compensatory Time-Off (“Comp Time”)	29
Overtime for Non-Exempt Employees	30
Travel-Related Expenses	
PAID TIME OFF	
Paid Time Off	30
Holiday Observances	30
Vacation Pay/Vacation Time	31
Vacation Pay	38
Vacation Time Accrual	38
Vacation Time Advancement	39
Vacation Time Carry Over	39
Sick Time	32
Use of Sick Time under the Leave from Employment for Victims of Family Violence Act	40
Emergency Closings/Inclement Weather	41
Emergency Closing	41
Inclement Weather Work from Home Day	41
Sick Leave Bank Donation and Use	41

Travel Expense Reimbursement/Use of Personal Vehicle	33
LEAVES OF ABSENCE	34
Vacation Time Planning and Approval	34
Sick Leave Bank Donation and Use	34
Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)	35
Pregnancy	36
Lactation/Breastfeeding	36
Personal Leave of Absence	36
Bereavement	37
Jury Duty and Witness Leave	37
Military Leave	38
Volunteer Firefighter/Ambulance Service Member	38
BENEFITS AND BENEFIT PROGRAMS	39
Medical, Dental and Vision Care Insurance	39
Medical	39
Dental	40
Vision	40
COBRA	40
Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for Medical and Dependent Care	41
Group Life Insurance	41
Disability Leave/Short-Term and Long-Term	41
Returning from Disability Leave	
Approved Workers' Compensation	42
Retirement	42
403(b) Tax-Sheltered Annuity Plan	42
Teachers' Retirement Board (TRB)	43

Teachers' Retirement System	52
SERC Policy for TRB Participation	52

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	44
--	-----------

Handbook Revision Date(s) : September 2008; Updated July 2010, July 2011, February 2012, October 2012, July 2013, December 2013, May 2014, December 2014, May 2016, and September 2023.

DRAFT

A Message from the SERC Executive Director

Dear SERC Colleague,

Welcome to the State Education Resource Center (SERC)! It is my sincere hope that this Employee Handbook helps you to better understand our policies and procedures.

We at SERC are proud of our accomplishments and contributions toward our mission of serving educators, families, and community members on behalf of positive life outcomes for children and youth in Connecticut.

To accomplish our mission, we depend on employees who will make a constant, conscious effort to attain excellence in the performance of their assigned responsibilities. We recognize that our employees represent our most important resource. You are a determining factor in our efforts to serve as a leader in the field of professional learning. Therefore, let me personally encourage you to help us enhance the quality reputation that we have achieved regarding our work.

SERC has published a digital version of all policies, located on the ADP employee website. Our policies are updated periodically and updates will be posted on the ADP employee website after approval by SERC's Board of Directors. This Handbook is an effort to provide you with a summary of current applicable information as a resource for successful employment with SERC.

Verification of your receipt and acknowledgment of the contents of this resource is necessary. This acknowledgment will be accomplished electronically and via hard copy. *Your acknowledgment does not change the at-will nature of your employment.*

Thank you for your review of this information and for choosing to work at SERC. Feel free to call me, your supervisor, or the Human Resources office if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ingrid M. Canady, Ed.D.
Executive Director



INTRODUCTION AND INTERPRETATION

This Handbook has been prepared to assist you in becoming acquainted with SERC. This material will be a primary source of reference during your period of employment with the agency. It will provide you with a summary of relevant laws, policies, and practices, and supersedes any previous agency policies or practices. The Handbook is reviewed by a subcommittee inclusive of SERC supervisors, General Counsel, the Human Resources Manager, and the Operations Subcommittee of the SERC Board of Directors.

SERC employees are held accountable for Handbook contents. Therefore, employees are encouraged to seek clarification of its contents and may propose alternate wording to policies in writing for clarity purposes to the Human Resources Manager. Employees will be notified when changes are made to the Handbook and a revised version is in effect. The most recent version of the Handbook can be accessed on the SERC ADP employee website.

This Handbook is not a contract of employment or a guarantee of future employment for any particular period of time and should not be construed as such. SERC adheres to the policy of employment-at-will.

In order to adapt to its changing needs, SERC reserves the right to revise, discontinue, suspend, or modify any of the policies, practices, and benefits contained in this Handbook at any time with or without notice and at its sole discretion. Thoughtful reading of each section of this Handbook will help clarify what is expected of each of us in order for all staff to realize the greatest amount of satisfaction from our work.

Establishment of SERC

The State Education Resource Center (SERC) was established over 50 years ago as a “focal point of action and communication for special education personnel from throughout the state” (CT State Department of Education newsletter, October 1969). We have served local school districts, state-level policymakers, families, community agencies, and other stakeholders by facilitating professional learning, including technical assistance and training; providing resources, in part through a centralized library; and leading a range of other activities and supports over our five decades in operation.

As we evolved, SERC was statutorily tasked to serve the CT State Board of Education by assisting the Board with “...the provision of programs and activities that will promote educational equity and excellence.” We became a Connecticut quasi-public agency in 2014, recognizing our unique position to work closely with communities across the State. The Office of the State Comptroller defines quasi-public agencies as “independent government corporations created through legislation to perform a particular service or set of public functions.” SERC employees are **not** State of Connecticut employees.

All of the agency’s efforts are designed to address educational equity and opportunity gaps. SERC’s consultants and staff, in collaboration with our partners, build the capacity of

educators, service providers, and families to meet the diverse needs of our student population.

SERC recognizes that to be effective in facilitating change that is systemic, results-based, and enduring, all stakeholders must be included in the change process. Through partnerships with us, organizations shape their own transformation while SERC facilitates the process and customizes the application of research and new thinking. SERC maintains many ongoing, years-long relationships with local education agencies and organizations, and offers continued support to foster and sustain systemic change.

Mission, Vision, Beliefs, and Values

Our Mission

SERC provides resources, professional learning, and a centralized library to educators, families, and community members in collaboration with the Connecticut State Department of Education and other partners.

Our Vision

Equity. Excellence. Education.

SERC believes that all students have the right to access opportunities and experiences that reflect their differences and abilities. We are concerned that in Connecticut, educational outcomes for students of color, students who are English language learners, and students with disabilities continue to lag behind outcomes for other students. To help eliminate these gaps, SERC addresses institutional racism and other issues of social justice in schools and districts and both models and facilitates equity in education.

Our Beliefs and Values

SERC values **Learning** - Our function is to educate and promote growth and change, both internally and externally, through continuous reflection.

SERC values **Excellence** - We promote and sustain a passionate culture of high expectations, quality, and accountability.

SERC values **Diversity and Equity** - We maximize the strengths and contributions of people with differing gifts, talents, styles, and abilities, and provide multiple perspectives.

SERC values **Shared Leadership** - We generate individual and collective decision-making, risk-taking, and initiative.

SERC values **Community** - We provide a respectful, collaborative, and trusting environment.

Equity, Excellence, Education: SERC's Role in Connecticut

Connecticut public schools have a huge task. They must work to meet federal and state mandates and build the capacity of their educators to provide effective, equitable instruction that supports all students, ensuring access for students with special needs, students of color, and English language learners; i.e., students who have been historically marginalized in Connecticut's schools. SERC not only supports individual schools and districts in serving students, it coordinates this effort on a statewide level, transforming systems in a way that helps ensure excellence in education. This statewide role makes SERC's involvement essential when Connecticut policymakers pursue equitable outcomes and develop and implement any future consequential changes in the delivery of educational services.

SERC's Influence

Inclusion. SERC was explicitly created as the entity that helps the state meet its responsibilities to students with disabilities, most recently under the legal obligations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). As it evolved, SERC led the integration of special and general education, historically divided systems, into a unified approach of education that promotes equitable policies, culturally relevant practices, and accessible structures that develop learning communities within schools.

Equity. SERC's longstanding commitment to equity has provided a unique perspective on addressing the current opportunity gaps. Its blueprint, outlined in "Equity in Education: A Transformational Approach" (December 2011) and demonstrated in our work with schools and districts, reflects five critical elements toward transformational change and capacity building in education (for details: <http://ctserc.org/equity>). SERC and its partners work to ensure that equity and excellence are at the forefront of decisions made on behalf of ALL students.

Collaboration. SERC recognizes that to be effective in facilitating change that is systemic, effective, and enduring, all stakeholders must be included in the change process. Through collaborative leadership with SERC, education systems and other like-minded organizations shape their own transformation while SERC helps guide the process and problem-solving. SERC also capitalizes on relationships among partners to offer further support.

Scope. SERC provides services to a broad range of constituents, including state-level policymakers, educators, families, and community members through a variety of venues and media. SERC's three major functions—creation and provision of resources, operation of a centralized library, and facilitation of professional learning experiences and programming—are organized across several units and job positions covering a wide range of supports and services for the state.

SERC's decades of work on behalf of all students has made a real difference to the schools and families that serve them.

Section A--EMPLOYMENT

Organizational Structure

The SERC Board of Directors sets overall policies for the organization. SERC's Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors and is responsible for implementing the agency's policies. All employees report to a direct supervisor, as indicated in the organization chart and/or their job description.

Nature of Employment

SERC adheres to the policy of **employment-at-will**, which allows either the employee or the employer to terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause, and with or without notice. The policy of employment-at-will may be modified only by a formal written contract signed by both the employee and the Executive Director, evidencing SERC's intent to enter into a contract of employment.

Employee Classification Categories

The purpose of this section is to clarify the definitions of employment categories so that employees clearly understand their benefit eligibility and employment status under federal and state wage and hour laws.

Each employee is designated as either exempt or non-exempt from state and federal wage and hour laws. Whether an employee is exempt or non-exempt is determined by the nature of their position and duties. In addition to the exempt categories, each employee is classified as regular full-time or regular part-time.

Exempt

Exempt employees are those employees engaged in executive, administrative, or professional type of work. Their duties are such that they are exempt from the overtime and minimum wage provisions of state and federal wage and hour laws. In general, exempt employees are those who regularly exercise discretion and independent judgment.

Non-Exempt

Non-exempt employees are those employees who are subject to the overtime and minimum wage provisions of state and federal wage and hour laws. If a non-exempt employee is eligible for overtime, that employee must receive pre-approval from their supervisor prior to working any overtime hours. In general, such employees are eligible for overtime pay for actual work completed in excess of 40 hours per week.

Regular Full-Time

Regular full-time employees are regularly scheduled to work at least 37.5 hours per week. These employees are eligible for participation in all employee benefits subject to the terms and conditions of each benefit program.

Regular Part-Time

Regular part-time employees are regularly scheduled to work not more than 29 hours per week. Part-time employees are eligible to receive all legally-mandated benefits, but are ineligible to receive all other SERC benefit programs except SERC's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Temporary Employee or Contract Workers

Temporary Employees or Contracted Workers are hired to temporarily supplement the workforce or to assist in the completion of a special project. Employment assignments in this category are of a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status. Temporary employees retain temporary status unless, and until, notified in writing of a change. While temporary employees receive all legally-mandated benefits, such as worker's compensation insurance and payment into Social Security, they are ineligible to receive all other SERC benefit programs.

Immigration Law Compliance

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Verification Form I-9 or E-Verify and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are re-hired must complete the form if they have not completed an I-9 with SERC within the past three years, or if their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid. In certain cases, depending on the nature of the documentation the employee has presented to complete the I-9, it may be necessary to re-verify his or her employment eligibility at a later time.

Attendance and Punctuality

Regular and predictable attendance and punctuality are important to SERC. SERC employees work as a team and success requires that each person is in the right place at the right time. A supervisor should be notified as soon as possible in advance of anticipated lateness or absence. If the absence is unexpected, notice must be given no later than the start of the workday. Personal matters requiring time away from work, such as medical appointments, should be scheduled during non-work hours when possible. Time away from work during regular work hours, other than lunch or regularly scheduled breaks, must be approved by a direct supervisor prior to taking the time. It is the employee's obligation to notify their supervisor of their whereabouts and how to reach them when they're out of the office during

regular work hours.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather, SERC will follow the early release, delayed opening, work from home, or closure decision of the Leadership Team. In the event the agency's office closes due to inclement weather, all employees scheduled to work in-office that day should assume they are working remotely and will be paid at their regular rate. Employees scheduled to work in-office, who do not report to work on a day when the office is open, are required to use accrued time off; if no accrued paid time off is available, then the employee will not be paid for that day.

Payday

Employees are paid biweekly and should review their pay stubs for errors. Errors should be reported to Human Resources immediately. Human Resources will take the steps necessary to correct errors.

Employee and Medical Files

Employee and medical files are maintained in accordance with Connecticut's Statutes regarding personnel and medical files, as well as the Americans With Disabilities Act as it relates to medical files. Access to information contained in these files is restricted and released solely in accordance with applicable law. Personal information contained in an employee or medical file will only be released to a third party according to current laws.

Employees must provide a written request if they wish to inspect or retrieve a copy of any documents contained in either a personnel or medical file. SERC may take up to 10 business days to provide the requested documents.

Employee Data Changes

It is the employee's responsibility to notify Human Resources in writing and provide the necessary forms (located on ADP) of any changes in home address, telephone number, marital status, dependency status, group life beneficiary designation, education, other significant life changes, and current emergency contact information. Keeping this information up-to-date is required and will avoid problems concerning taxes, employee benefits, and other important matters.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are fundamental to sound management and correlate directly to performance evaluation and salary administration. Each job description includes the job title, employee classification (exempt, non-exempt, full-time, part-time, etc.), a statement of the fundamental purpose of the job, the essential functions of the job, a list of specific responsibilities, a statement of minimal and desired qualifications, and the physical requirements. A job description is available for each employee and located on ADP. Since

job responsibilities can change from time to time, job descriptions may be reviewed and updated accordingly, with or without notice to employees.

Career Advancement

SERC is committed to promotion from within when appropriate. Only applicants possessing the required skills, education, experience, and other requisite qualifications will be considered for internally advertised positions. Consideration may also include any documentation related to performance. All employees promoted into new positions will undergo a 90-day probationary period as described in the On-Boarding Period section below.

In the interest of placing the most qualified applicant into an open position, SERC's business needs may require employees to be transferred into other positions at the Leadership Team's sole discretion with or without notice.

References and Reference Checks

Background and Reference Checks as a Part of the Hiring Process

SERC reserves the right to check the employment references and educational credentials of all applicants in compliance with applicable law, in order to ensure that individuals who join SERC are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful. Employment offers are contingent on the successful completion of the background screening results, administered by a third-party vendor. In compliance with applicable law, applicants and employees have the right to review the nature and scope of their background checks.

Employment and Financial References

Employees will not disclose financial or specific individual employment information about any former or current SERC employee. All external requests for references must be submitted in writing to the Human Resources Manager and must be accompanied by a signed release authorizing the release of information to the requestor, from the employee in question. It is SERC's policy that only dates of employment, job title held, and salary information will be verified when necessary. If the verbal or written request is made for more than the aforementioned information, such request must be reviewed with SERC General Counsel before responding to said request.

Professional References

All professional reference requests on behalf of a current or former colleague employed by the agency should be provided to the Human Resources Manager.

Initial On-Boarding Meeting

New employees will be scheduled for an initial on-boarding meeting on their first day of work. In any event where the first day must be changed, all benefit eligibility will be effective based on the first day of work. During the initial meeting, the newly hired

employees will be required to fill out all necessary forms (i.e., I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Form, W4 form (W-9 for contractors), State Tax Withholding, Direct Deposit form, etc.). Actual employment is established once the I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification form has been completed and verified by the HR representative. If those forms and verifications of employment eligibility are not completed during the first three days of employment, SERC is required by law to terminate employment.

On-Boarding Period

The probationary on-boarding period for all new and recently promoted employees is 90 days from the date the role is assumed. During this period, each employee has the opportunity to demonstrate skills, competencies, professional behavior, attitudes, and abilities for the job for which they were hired. Employees' progress will be discussed within 30 and 60 days of employment. At the conclusion of the 90-day period, probationary employees may become a permanent employee, or the employee's probationary period may be extended for an additional 90 days. Employees failing to meet the agency's standards of performance, attitude, attendance, and collaboration during the probationary period may be terminated from employment. Please note that the completion of the probationary period does not change the at-will nature of employment at SERC and at all times new and newly promoted employees may be terminated for any reason or no reason at all and at any time with or without notice. Any increase in compensation is not available during the probationary period for new or newly promoted employees.

Off-Boarding

Any employee terminating their employment with SERC voluntarily or involuntarily must attend an off-boarding meeting with Human Resources. This appointment is necessary to confirm the termination date, to ensure that all agency property is returned on or before this date, and to review benefits and entitlements, to include COBRA.

Additionally, employees who voluntarily terminate their relationship with SERC will be asked to participate in an exit interview. The exit interview is an optional opportunity for the employee to articulate any questions, recommendations, or concerns related to their employment with the agency. If desired, the exit interview may be conducted through an anonymous Survey Monkey link.

Open Door

It is recognized that timely access to information, guidance, and support from an employee's supervisor and/or Director enhances the ability of a SERC employee to perform at their highest ability. In a similar way, an accumulation of unspoken, unanswered questions can result in dissatisfaction and can impact working relationships. If an employee has a problem/issue, it is to SERC's advantage to address it. Please review any concerns or questions with your supervisor and/or Director as soon as possible.

It is neither meant to imply that every employee issue/problem will receive immediate action nor that the agency will agree with an employee's position on a particular issue. However, supervisors and/or Directors will listen to employees, and, it's hoped that in most instances, the agency will be able to provide information, support, guidance, or address a problem in a manner that is supportive to all the parties concerned.

Relatives In the Workplace

It is widely accepted that employment of family members in the same area of an organization can cause serious conflicts and problems concerning favoritism and employee morale. In these circumstances, all parties, including supervisors, leave themselves open to charges of inequitable consideration in decisions concerning work assignments, transfer opportunities, time-off privileges, performance evaluation, disciplinary actions, and discharge from employment. In addition, should the related parties have any conflict outside the workplace, this may impact the work environment, thereby creating additional concerns within the agency. SERC's adheres to Connecticut's Office of State Ethics rules regarding the hiring of family members of an employee.

Disclosure of Criminal History

Pursuant to applicable law, applicants and employees are not required to disclose the existence of any arrest, criminal charge, or conviction, if the records have been erased pursuant to applicable state statutes. Otherwise, disclosure of criminal history is required to the extent permitted by applicable law.

Social Media

Some SERC employees may maintain personal social media accounts, websites and/or blogs, or write for the websites of others. In general, we view personal websites and blogs positively and respect the right of SERC employees to use them as an avenue of self-expression and outreach.

As SERC employees, you are seen by outside parties as representatives of the agency. Therefore, as in all areas of daily life, a staff member's personal website, blog, or commentary is a reflection on the organization, whether or not SERC is specifically discussed or referenced. If you choose to identify yourself as a SERC employee or to discuss matters related to the organization on a website, blog, or social media account, please bear in mind that, although you may believe your site is a personal project, many readers may assume you are speaking on behalf of SERC. SERC is a nonpartisan organization prohibited from any partisan political activity. Employees should not post internal reports, policies, procedures or other internal business-related confidential communications. All employees must comply with this

restriction for all work-related activities and should avoid any personal partisan activity that might be attributed to SERC.

Employees are solely responsible for what they post online. Any conduct that adversely affects an employee's job performance, the performance of fellow employees or otherwise adversely affects the SERC community or its legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence, insubordinate, or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject an employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Personal use of social media should only be conducted in a limited capacity during work hours and should not impact an employee's work time dramatically. Employees have no right to privacy while accessing social media at work or on agency-owned equipment.

Section B--DIVERSITY AND EQUITY

Equal Employment Opportunity

It is the policy of SERC to provide equal opportunity in employment to qualified individuals regardless of race, creed, color, religion, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, past or present disability, perceived disability, physical or mental handicap, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity or expression, military service, pregnancy, status as a victim of domestic violence, or any other legally protected class in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. This commitment extends to all employment decisions, including but not limited to: recruiting, hiring, promotion, training, compensation, discipline, and discharge, and to all terms, benefits, privileges, and conditions of employment. SERC prohibits retaliation against any employee who provides information about, complains, or assists in the investigation of any complaint of discrimination or violation of the agency's Equal Employment Opportunity policy and will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, or any violation of the policy in a confidential manner.

Affirmative Action/Title IX

Title IX is the groundbreaking federal law passed in 1972 to ensure that students and employees in educational settings are treated equally and fairly. The law protects against discrimination based on gender. The preamble to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states that: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

It is SERC's policy that everyone has notice of the grievance procedure adopted by the agency, which is a prompt and equitable resolution of any complaint alleging any action prohibited by Title IX. All SERC employees should be aware that the individual named

below presently serves as the designated Title IX Coordinator. This person is therefore the individual a SERC employee must contact to investigate an internal SERC Title IX complaint. SERC's nondiscrimination statement reads as follows:

It is the policy of the State Education Resource Center (SERC) that no person shall be discriminated against or excluded from participation in any SERC programs and activities on the basis of race, color, language, religion, age, marital or civil union status, national origin, ancestry, sex/gender, intellectual disability, physical disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

SERC Title IX Coordinator:

Michelle A. Weaver, J.D.
General Counsel, State Education
Resource Center

(860) 632-1485 Ext. 364

weaver@ctserc.org

Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA)

SERC acknowledges and affirms its commitment to ensure an accessible workplace for all employees under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) and subscribes to an interactive process to clarify what an employee might need to accomplish their essential job functions and identify the appropriate reasonable accommodation/s. SERC employees can find ADA information, including notice of their rights, and SERC's grievance procedures in their new hire packets as well as on the ADP employee website. The ADAAA protects individuals from coercion, intimidation, threat, harassment, or interference in the exercise of their own rights, or the encouragement of someone else's exercise of their rights. Please see the Human Resources Manager for further information.

Harassment and Sexual Harassment Prevention

Harassment Prohibited

Workplace harassment is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Connecticut Fair Employment Practices Act, and other applicable federal or state laws.

Workplace harassment and discrimination is defined as unwelcome conduct based on race, color, gender identity or expression, religion, sex (including pregnancy, child-bearing capacity, sterilization, fertility, or related medical conditions), national origin, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, civil union status, marital status, ancestry, present or past history of mental disability, intellectual disability, learning disability, or physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness), and is prohibited.

Anti-discrimination laws also prohibit retaliation for filing a complaint, testifying, or opposing any discriminatory employment practice.

Sexual Harassment Prohibited

Under Connecticut law, SERC is required to provide employees with sexual harassment training. All newly hired employees are to complete two hours of sexual harassment training within 30 days of employee or in the event that an employee will assume a supervisory role the training must be completed within six months, and then be retrained at least every 10 years. As an employer, SERC will maintain training records for a minimum of one year.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated or condoned. Verbal or physical conduct by a supervisor or co-worker relating to an employee's sex which has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, unreasonably interfering with the employee's work performance, or adversely affecting the employee's employment opportunities is prohibited. Sexual harassment includes but is not limited to unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, or any conduct of a sexual nature when:

- A. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- B. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting said individual; or
- C. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Examples of Sexual Harassing Behavior

While it is not possible to identify each and every act that constitutes sexual harassment, examples of conduct that may be considered sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances from a co-worker or supervisor, such as unwanted hugs, touches, or kisses;
- Unwelcome attention of a sexual nature, such as degrading, suggestive or lewd remarks or noises;
- Dirty jokes, derogatory or pornographic posters, cartoons or drawings; and
- The threat or suggestion that continued employment advancement, assignment or earnings depend on whether or not the employee will submit to or tolerate harassment.

Any infraction of this policy by any employee should be reported immediately to a supervisor, and/or the Human Resources Department.

While SERC cannot guarantee confidentiality in all cases, SERC will endeavor to keep such

reports or complaints confidential, to the extent allowed under the law, to enable their investigation and resolution. All reports or complaints of suspected sexual harassment will be investigated thoroughly.

Retaliation against any employee for complaining about sexual harassment is prohibited under this policy and illegal under state and federal law. Violations of this policy will not be permitted and may result in discipline up to and including discharge from employment. Individuals who engage in acts of sexual harassment may also be subject to civil and criminal penalties.

Any employee who believes that he or she has been harassed in the workplace in violation of this policy may also file a complaint with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, Rowland Government Center, 55 W. Main Street, Suite 210, Waterbury, CT 06702-2004 (TELEPHONE NUMBER (203) 805-6530; TDD NUMBER (203) 805-6579) and/or the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (US EEOC), Boston Area Office, John F. Kennedy Federal Building, 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203 (TELEPHONE NUMBER 800-669-4000). Connecticut law requires that a formal written complaint be filed with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities within 300 days of the date when the alleged harassment occurred. Remedies for sexual harassment include cease and desist orders, back pay, compensatory damages, hiring, promotion or reinstatement.

Other Forms of Prohibited Harassment

Other workplace harassment is often verbal or physical conduct that insults or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual because of an individual's protected class, including but not limited to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, color, religious creed, marital status, national origin, ancestry, military service/veteran status, present or past history of mental disorder, intellectual disability, learning disability or physical disability or age. Again, while it is not possible to list all the circumstances that may constitute other forms of workplace harassment, the following are some examples of conduct that may be considered other forms of prohibited harassment: slurs; denigrating written or graphic material (including graffiti and jokes); or threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts based on membership in a protected class. SERC will address any alleged harassment on these bases in the same manner as sexual harassment, and employees should follow the policy and procedure outlined here if they believe that they have been harassed.

The most effective method to put an end to any type of harassment is to tell the person to stop. Let the person know the action is unwelcome and is reportable. To report an incident or complaint of workplace harassment, see the Human Resources Manager or the ADP employee website for procedural guidelines and the SERC Harassment Reporting form. Complaints may be made verbally or in writing to the Human Resources Manager and SERC

Legal Counsel. Any employee may bring a good faith complaint of harassment without fear of retaliation. All complaints of harassment will be kept confidential to the extent practical under the circumstances necessary to the investigation and resolution.

Any employee found to have engaged in inappropriate behavior, including harassing behavior, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Any questions should be directed to your immediate supervisor or the Human Resources Department. As with sexual harassment, employees may make inquiries of, or file complaints with, the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, and/or US EEOC.

Section C--WORKPLACE SAFETY

Safety Concerns

The safety of SERC employees and patrons is of primary concern. All employees must follow safe work practices and help create safe working conditions at all times. It is important that any potentially unsafe conditions be reported immediately to a supervisor or the Human Resources Manager.

SERC also promotes an in-office atmosphere of a "Clean and Tidy Work Area". In order to be courteous to colleagues and in the best interests of agency health, all SERC employees should aspire to keep an organized and safe working environment at the office. This includes, but is not limited to, having an uncluttered workspace to be compliant with both ADA and Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) requirements.

Emergency/ Disaster Guidelines for All SERC Sites

The Emergency/Disaster Plan Guidelines for all SERC sites are operationalized for conditions where SERC must respond to an emergency or disaster. It is important that all SERC employees become familiar with the Guidelines. In the event of an emergency or disaster, please follow instructions from either emergency personnel or SERC's Emergency Coordinators. Please visit the ADP employee website for details. Your attention to this very important matter is appreciated and could save lives.

Accidents and Illnesses in the Workplace

All work-related accidents must be reported to SERC immediately. Failure to immediately report a work-related accident or injury might jeopardize an employee's ability to collect workers' compensation benefits. Employees should report any work-related accident to their immediate supervisor.

Illegal Substance and Alcohol Free Workplace

SERC adheres to the federally mandated Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988. All employees are expected to be present at work in a condition fit to perform their duties. In keeping with this policy, every employee has a right to work and perform their job in an environment that is free from controlled substances or any product with the potential to cause impairment.

Federal law prohibits the manufacture, distribution, possession, or use of a controlled substance while on the job or in the workplace. Employees are also prohibited from being under the influence of a controlled substance, not prescribed by their physician, while on the job or in the workplace.

As required by the federal Drug Free Workplace Act, SERC must inform contracting or granting agencies of any and all criminal drug statute convictions within 10 days after receiving notification from the employee, or otherwise receiving notice of a conviction.

The legal use of prescription drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair an employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job safely and effectively. Please see the Human Resources Manager for confidential, employee-specific guidance.

Any employee violating this policy and/or whose work performance or behavior is adversely affected by the use of controlled substances will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

SERC reserves the right to request employees to undergo drug or alcohol testing in accordance with all applicable laws.

This policy is intended to be consistent with and comply with the Connecticut Palliative Use of Marijuana Act.

Smoke-Free Workplace

It is the policy of SERC to provide a smoke-free environment in all agency facilities. Smoking, including the use of electronic nicotine delivery systems and vapor products, is prohibited. SERC staff who smoke must do so outdoors in the designated smoking areas in the rear of the buildings and at least 25 feet away from building entrances, outdoor air intakes, and operable windows as per state law. This policy also applies to SERC patrons, independent contractors, and visitors while on the premises. Interested employees should speak to the Human Resources Manager regarding the specific locations.

Workplace Threats and Violence

Threats, threatening behavior, abusive conduct, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests, district personnel, or other individuals by anyone will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy will lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, arrest, and prosecution. Please visit the ADP employee website for details.

Visitors in the Workplace

There may be occasions when friends and family of SERC employees visit the employee in the workplace. Although visitors to the workplace are welcome, it is important, however, that these visits not become disruptive to work routines and visitors should not stay for long periods of time. SERC reserves the right to deny any visitor, including former employees, access to business offices.

Section D--WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS

Whistleblower Protection

SERC requires all employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. As employees and representatives of SERC, we must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

This Whistleblower Protection is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns internally so that SERC can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of all employees to report concerns about violations of SERC's Ethical Conduct Policy or suspected violations of law or regulations that govern SERC's operations.

It is contrary to the values of SERC for anyone to retaliate against anyone who in good faith reports an ethics violation, or a suspected violation of law, such as a complaint of discrimination, or suspected fraud, or suspected violation of any regulation governing the operations of SERC. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination.

For reporting procedures, please see the Ethical Conduct Policy.

Confidentiality

In the course of employment with SERC, employees may have access to or learn about confidential information. Employees are responsible for protecting this information. Employees should remain cognizant of the difference between confidential information and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) parameters. In the case of FOIA, requests for records may be initiated. Certain records are specifically exempted from public disclosure by federal or state statute, such as Employee and medical files.

Employees should not discuss confidential matters with fellow employees or with individuals outside of the agency except as required in the course of their work. Disclosure of the agency access door code to individuals who are not employed by SERC is strictly prohibited.

Additionally, it will be considered a violation of agency policy to record, by any means, conversations with other employees without first obtaining approval from a supervisor. The intent is to preclude concern on the part of any employee that their words may be covertly

recorded. This concern can inhibit spontaneous and honest dialogue, most particularly when said conversation is regarding sensitive and/or confidential matters.

The obligation not to disclose confidential agency information continues even if employment at SERC ceases. Disclosure, including recording, of confidential information in violation of this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, and may provide grounds for legal action against the current or former employee.

Data Breach Service

Should SERC experience a data breach that includes a Connecticut-based employee's non-public information (e.g., name and Social Security Number or driver's license number), the agency will offer said employee free identity-theft prevention services and, if applicable, identity theft mitigation services for the amount of time required by state law.

Copyright Infringement

SERC employees are prohibited from using the agency network or resources to illegally download or share music, video, and all other copyrighted intellectual property. SERC may be obligated to provide copyright holders with information about users of the SERC network who have violated the law.

The Copyright Law of the United States and related laws can be found in Title 17 of the United States Code. As a general matter, copyright infringement occurs when a copyrighted work is reproduced, distributed, performed, publicly displayed, or made into a derivative work without the permission of the copyright owner. In the file-sharing context, downloading or uploading substantial parts of a copyrighted work without authority constitutes an infringement. Penalties for copyright infringement include significant civil and criminal penalties.

For more information, please see the Web site of the U.S. Copyright Office at www.copyright.gov, especially their FAQs at www.copyright.gov/help/faq.

Conflicts of Interest/Outside Business Interests

Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when SERC is adversely affected by an employee's conduct, actions, or behavior that may affect areas of confidentiality, customer relations, safety, security, and morale. Engagement in any business practice that compromises SERC in any way may result in the immediate termination of any and all employees involved in such activity, and may be grounds for legal action against those employees. SERC employees should not give, offer, or promise, directly or indirectly, anything of value to any representative of an outside business.

Outside Business Interests

Outside business interests or employment should not interfere with an employee's SERC

job performance or otherwise create a conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict of interest. SERC recognizes that employees may seek additional employment during off hours.

Examples of activities that interfere with SERC's business interests include, but are not limited to: working for a competing agency; using time during work hours or agency facilities or equipment toward other business interests; and engaging in an outside activity that results in loss of time from the work day, presents the appearance of a conflict, or is a distraction from job performance.

Illegal Activities

An SERC employee may not engage in any illegal activities while on SERC property, or in the use of SERC property, or while engaged in employment for SERC.

As permitted by law, an SERC employee or contracted worker must report any arrest or criminal conviction to their supervisor or to SERC's Human Resources Manager within two business days of the occurrence. Each incident will be evaluated on an individual basis. Depending on the circumstances, SERC may institute disciplinary measures including unpaid administrative leave or termination from employment.

Customer Service

Personal contact with the public, being helpful on the telephone, and correspondence sent to session participants, external partners, and Library members are a reflection not only of the employees involved, but of the professionalism of SERC. Positive interactions that provide equitable and respectful engagement with those we serve enhance the public's perception of SERC, and also generate greater and continued participant and patron loyalty. Provision of high-quality customer service is expected of SERC employees.

Professionalism and Being Part of the SERC Team

Employee conduct has a direct bearing on the general public opinion of SERC; therefore, it is imperative that every employee respects the rights of others and conducts themselves in a professional and business-like manner at all times. Every employee has a shared responsibility toward improving the quality of SERC's work environment.

Professional Learning and Development

SERC believes that its greatest potential for growth, impact, sustainability, and partnership is based upon the talents and efforts of its employees. The achievement of this potential is the direct result of the collective efforts of all employees in the SERC professional learning community. To achieve its goals, SERC encourages employees to develop and to use their talents and abilities to the fullest extent. SERC encourages active participation in internal meetings, study groups, team professional learning plan development, professional

learning sessions, “*Courageous Conversations About Race*,” and other antiracist/social justice learning and development.

The Executive Director and supervisors may determine when there is a need for additional training, but employees bear the final responsibility for their own personal and professional learning and development. SERC expects that employees will work to the fullest extent of their abilities and inform supervisors when they feel additional training and/or resources would be appropriate.

Attendance and Punctuality

Regular attendance at work is an essential function of every job at SERC and is a condition of employment. It is critical that every employee reports to work each day and on time.

Employees reporting to work after their scheduled start time will be considered tardy. Employees who are excessively tardy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. SERC reserves the right to apply unused paid time off to unauthorized absences.

Performance Evaluation

The *SERC Performance Evaluation System* is composed of several principles that strive for a climate supportive of continuous learning and growth within the performance evaluation process. Continuous improvement and accountability at both the individual and agency level is inherent in the SERC core beliefs and values.

The performance evaluation system is intended to be an iterative and collaborative process, designed to review an employee’s job performance in an objective and consistent manner, to give a clear picture of progress in terms of well-articulated performance standards, and to provide guidance in performance growth and improvement relative to the position description. It affords opportunities for both a supervisor and an employee to discuss performance and work assignment, recognize and encourage strengths, identify and address areas for improvement, and discuss positive, purposeful approaches to meeting goals.

Performance Evaluation Rubric

Employees and their supervisor are required to discuss job performance and related goals both informally and formally. All employees will informally be provided with evaluative feedback from their supervisor on a periodic basis during supervisory meetings. The formal evaluation occurs on an annual cycle, correlated to the fiscal year, and is documented through the *Performance Evaluation Rubric*, as aligned with *Annual Performance Goals (APG)* and a *Plan for Professional Learning (PPL)*. Formal performance evaluative feedback may be provided on an “as needed” basis per employee request or supervisor concern.

The intent of the performance evaluation system is the growth and development of the employee relative to their job performance. Toward this purpose, an employee's submission of their *Annual Performance Goals (APG)* may be modified at the discretion of their supervisor to better address a priority area or need relative to job performance and growth. While the aim is for full or partial consensus between an employee and their supervisor within the performance evaluation process, there may be occasions when a supervisory decision must take precedence, such as with goal-setting and scoring of the *Performance Evaluation Rubric*.

Procedural Safeguards and Employee Protections in Performance Evaluation

A step-by-step process is available to an employee relative to their need for support within the performance evaluation system and includes a supervisor review meeting, notations for the record, a record review, neutral facilitation, and mediation.

An employee may review their performance evaluation, documented in the SERC *Performance Evaluation Rubric*, submit written comments for inclusion in their permanent employee personnel file, and receive a copy of the evaluation. This information will be included should the file be transmitted or disclosed to a third party.

Please see the ADP employee website for *Performance Evaluation System Policy Guidelines* and a copy of the *Performance Evaluation Rubric*. An employee should also seek support from their supervisor and/or the Human Resources Manager for more specific guidance.

Performance Improvement

A performance improvement process may be implemented at SERC's discretion when an employee's job performance does not meet minimum expectations and/or to increase the quality of work. Depending on the specific circumstances of the performance adjustments needed and in SERC's discretion, actions to support employee growth and improvement may include peer coaching, mentoring and/or a *Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)*. A PIP describes, in writing, specific performance improvement goals and a timeframe for improvement.

Disciplinary Intervention

All employees are expected to be aware of and to comply with defined expectations for workplace conduct for the well-being of one another, those we serve, and our business operations. These expectations are outlined in this Handbook and its accompanying Policy Guidelines, available on the ADP employee website. Employees must also be mindful of applicable federal and state guidelines when conducting work on behalf of SERC. In the case of a conduct infraction, a step-by-step process may be implemented to address single and repeat occurrences of employee noncompliance. This is intended to provide the employee with structured opportunity to improve and to prevent any reoccurrence of the behavioral issues and/or policy violation.

Disciplinary intervention through this process is designed to be administered in a consistent manner in accordance with agency values, human resource best practices, and employment laws. At all times, SERC retains discretion as to any and all disciplinary intervention.

Procedural Safeguards and Employee Protections in Disciplinary Intervention

An employee will be provided with a copy of any documented disciplinary action to be taken within one business day after the date discipline is imposed. An employee has the right to submit a written rebuttal to such documented disciplinary action, including notice of termination. The rebuttal will be retained in the employee's personnel file and included should the file be transmitted or disclosed to a third party.

It should be noted that SERC reserves the right and sole discretion to determine through supervisory discretion, the order of corrective action, based on the specific circumstances and their severity. The agency is not obligated to follow a pattern of progressive discipline, nor is it intended in any way to limit the agency's right to terminate an employee at any time, with or without cause, and with or without advance notice. All SERC employees are and, at all times, remain **employees at-will**.

Corrective Action

Corrective action is a disciplinary process that addresses employee misconduct or policy violation as defined in this Handbook and its accompanying Policy Guidelines, which can be found on the ADP employee website. Corrective action may be taken when an employee's actions or behaviors do not meet agency-defined procedures or when an employee commits a policy infraction. There are levels of corrective action, depending on the seriousness of the concern or violation and the number of repeated actions or behavior occurrences. These levels may include, but are not limited to: verbal warning; written warning; a corrective action plan (CAP); or, when warranted, a combination of these disciplinary procedures. Through this process, the employee is placed on notice regarding the concern and, depending on the severity of the infraction, is given the opportunity to correct the concerning actions or behaviors. At all times, SERC retains sole discretion as to any and all corrective action taken on behalf of an SERC employee.

Separation of Employment, Exit Interview and Off-boarding

Employee terminations are generally classified as voluntary (initiated by the employee) or involuntary (initiated by the agency). SERC requests reasonable, professional, and appropriate notice of termination should an employee decide to pursue employment elsewhere.

Employees who voluntarily terminate their employment are asked to give, at minimum, two weeks' prior notice. Employees with supervisory responsibilities should consider a notice period of at least four weeks in order to begin transition planning. Employees have the ability to choose a voluntary termination date, although SERC reserves the right to

terminate employment with the agency prior to the intended date.

Voluntarily terminated employees will have their final wages paid in full no later than the next regularly scheduled payday through regular pay channels or by mail. Employees who are involuntarily terminated or discharged will be given their final paycheck in full no later than the next business day succeeding the date of discharge. In either circumstance, the employee's final paycheck will include payment for any accrued vacation time and/or reflect a wage deduction by SERC for repayment of any advanced/unaccrued paid time off.

Employees who voluntarily terminate their employment in "good standing" under this policy may be eligible for reemployment for a period of up to six months from the last date of employment. Former employees may be asked to apply through the formal recruitment process, and, if selected, will be considered as a new employee beyond the six-month timeframe. Employees who employment is in "good standing" shall mean that (i) Employee's termination was not initiated by

SERC pays for Unemployment Compensation Insurance, which provides temporary income for jobless employees who meet the appropriate criteria. Eligibility for unemployment will be determined, in part, by the reasons for termination SERC employment.

Exit Interview

Employees who terminate their employment with SERC may schedule an exit interview with the Human Resources Manager. The exit interview is an opportunity to articulate any questions, recommendations, or concerns related to employment with the agency.

Off-Boarding

Any employee terminating their employment with SERC must schedule an off-boarding meeting with the Human Resources Manager. This appointment is necessary to confirm the termination date, to ensure that all agency property is returned on or before this date, and to review benefits and entitlements.

Absences/Unauthorized Absences

Employees must follow subscribed communication procedures for providing notice to the agency on occasions when they will be absent from work. Failure to follow proper call-in procedures may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. See the ADP employee website for details.

Authorization for Repayment of Advanced Time-Off

Should a full-day absence place an employee into a negative balance of 40+ hours of sick or hours of vacation time-off, the employee must complete, and submit to Human Resources, the *Authorization for Repayment of Advance for Vacation Pay or Paid Time-Off* form on the next business day that they are in the office.

Medical Release to Return to Work

The agency reserves the right to request a note from the employee from a medical provider any absence of 3 or more consecutive days of requested sick time for an employee injury- or illness-related medical reason to ensure that the employee may safely return to work. In certain circumstances, a medical release may also be used to substantiate that the leave is in accordance with the Sick Time Policy. The request will be initiated by the Human Resources Manager, and documentation must immediately be provided to the HR Office upon the employee's return. All written medical information will be kept confidential in accordance with applicable law.

Consecutive Unauthorized Days of Absence

An employee who is unable to report to work at the designated time is required to notify their supervisor in accordance with Attendance and Punctuality policy and guidelines. An employee who fails to report to work for 3 consecutive business days without notifying SERC of the absence will be considered to have voluntarily terminated their employment with the agency as a result of job abandonment. Employees are responsible for confirming receipt of any notice of absence through subscribed communication procedures as outlined on the ADP employee website for this policy.

Personal Appearance/Dress Code

Employees of SERC contribute to the culture and reputation of the agency in the way they present themselves. A professional appearance is essential to a favorable impression with all stakeholders, including partners, participants, patrons, and community members. As part of this effort, the agency requires employees to maintain a neat and clean appearance that is appropriate for the workplace setting and for the work being performed.

If questionable attire is worn in the office, a supervisor and/or the Human Resources Manager will hold a personal, private discussion with the employee to advise and counsel the employee regarding the inappropriateness of their attire. Depending on the inappropriateness of the attire, the employee may be asked to return home and change. Should there be another occurrence of inappropriateness, a supervisor and the Human Resources Manager will hold a private discussion with the employee and corrective action may be taken (see Disciplinary Intervention). If there are additional concerns with attire, the employee will be sent home immediately to change. The employee will not be compensated for any work time lost as a result of having been sent home to change inappropriate attire, and therefore will need to take personal or vacation time, or time without pay in the absence of accrued time off. At the discretion of SERC, repeated violations of this policy will result in further disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Exceptions – Exceptions to dress code policy may be made at the discretion of supervisors and in accordance with applicable law. Employee notice will be provided

in advance.

For circumstances such that an employee's religious or national customs affect the way they dress in the workplace, please contact the Human Resources Manager to discuss a reasonable accommodation.

Please refer to policy guidelines on the ADP employee website for examples offered to clarify understanding of what is meant by appropriate attire. Requests for advice and assistance regarding this policy should be directed to the Human Resources Manager.

Use of Agency Property

In an effort to promote an efficient and productive work environment, employees are provided with agency property that includes a variety of items to be used for job-related purposes. Agency property include computers, telephones, internet access, desks, file cabinets, office space, copiers, postage and fax machines, and other equipment and supplies. SERC assumes no responsibility for the loss of, or damage to, any employee property maintained on the premises.

In appropriate circumstances, SERC reserves the right to access and inspect all agency property with or without prior notice. This encompasses the right to access and review all computer-related communications, including electronic mail, voice mail, internet access, computer files, and information stored on the hard drive, disks, and USB flash drives, as well as any faxes or mail sent to employees at the SERC address. See Electronic and Telephonic Communications policy for further information.

The agency may also just cause inspection of personal possessions brought onto agency premises at its discretion. For example, the agency may request to inspect packages, lunch boxes, computer bags, and purses. Employees are expected to cooperate with such inspections. Failure to cooperate in this regard may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Care in Use

Negligence in the care or use of agency property, unauthorized removal of agency property from the premises, or conversion of agency property for personal use may be cause for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. See the *Care in Use Agreement* form available on the ADP employee website for guidance.

Return of Agency Property

Agency property issued to an employee must be returned immediately at the time of separation of employment or any time that the agency should request its return. Under due circumstances, an employee may be liable for the cost of damaged or unreturned property. Employees under an extended leave of absence (considered as 20 or more days) or any disability leave will be asked to return all SERC property in the interim. Failure to

comply with said request is cause for disciplinary action. Additionally, employees out on any disability leave will have their network access disabled for the duration of their leave. An exception may be granted for a supervisor, including Directors, undertaking an extended leave of absence.

Electronic and Telephonic Communications

SERC maintains an email, voicemail, and telephone system, computers, internet access, and other business equipment (collectively called the “Technology Systems”) for the purpose of conducting the business of the organization. The devices and data stored on these Technology Systems, as well as the specialized software programs and systems developed for SERC’s use, are the sole property of SERC and must be protected appropriately.

In general, access to any component of the Technology Systems is limited to authorized users. An authorized user is someone, who in the sole discretion of SERC, requires access in order to support business activities. Employees are prohibited from using an unauthorized access code or password, access files that they have no permission to access, or disseminate confidential information that is derived from electronic or other sources, including stored communications. All passwords and access codes must be kept strictly confidential. SERC may monitor use of the Technology Systems on a random or other basis to ensure that they are being used for legitimate and intended business purposes.

Employees are expected to use SERC Technology Systems in the course of their work and should not use them for personal reasons with the exception of computers, internet access, and telephone. It is understood that the parameters for personal use are such that said use neither places an excessive or unreasonable burden on the Technology Systems or employee work time nor violates appropriate use as indicated above. The agency reserves the right to suspend electronic and telephonic communications at its discretion.

SERC reserves the right to monitor and/or read any electronic or telephone communication sent, received, or stored on SERC Technology Systems during the normal course of business.

Upon their on-boarding to SERC, employees will be required to sign a *Technology Systems Acceptable Use Policy form*. Failure to comply with appropriate use of said systems can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. In addition, SERC reserves the right to advise appropriate legal authorities of any illegal use of its Technology Systems.

Logos and Trademarks

SERC employees should respect all intellectual property laws. For the protection of the agency and its employees, it is critical that each employee adheres to laws governing copyright, fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, trademarks, and other

intellectual property, including the agency's own brands.

Document Retention

SERC adheres to specific protocols for document retention in compliance with State of Connecticut regulations concerning the responsibilities of its Fiscal and Human Resources offices, and the SERC Board of Directors.

Posting of Materials

Important federal and state legal information regarding employment is displayed in designated areas in print and/or on the ADP employee website, and all employees should periodically check for updated information. Employees may not remove, obstruct, or deface posted information.

Employee Suggestions

SERC welcomes suggestions from employees. The agency encourages suggestions because the individual working on a particular task or initiative can best recommend ways to increase quality and productivity. Suggestions may be submitted to one's supervisor, a Director, the Human Resources Manager, or through the employee suggestions mailbox.

Personal Use of Agency Equipment and Supplies

SERC employees are prohibited from using SERC equipment, including printers, copiers, postage and fax machines, and other equipment or supplies for personal, non-work related purposes. Technology systems such as computers, the internet and telephones may be used for personal use provided such use does not place an excessive or unreasonable burden on the technology systems or employee's work time, nor violate any other SERC policies. SERC's postage meter should not be used for employee's personal mail or any mail not related to SERC activities. SERC photocopiers and printers generally should not be used for personal use. Occasional personal use of such equipment may be permitted so long as it is infrequent and limited and does not put an excessive or unreasonable burden on SERC supplies, such as printer paper.

Office Security

SERC is not responsible for the safety of employee's personal belongings. Employees are strongly advised to keep purses, money, keys, and other valuables in locked places.

Section E-COMPENSATION

Hours of Work

The standard agency work schedule for full-time employees is 37.5 hours, Monday through Friday. Core staff operating hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Individual adjustments may be made when operational needs so require. The administrative offices will be open during

these standard hours.

Flexible Working Hours (Flextime)

A flexible (flextime) schedule is defined as a weekly work pattern for a regular, full-time employee that remains consistent or “fixed” on a quarterly basis, that is other than the agency’s standard work schedule, and that is selected by the employee from “flexible” scheduling options (see procedural guidelines on the ADP employee website) with a Director’s approval.

SERC will provide all regular full-time staff the opportunity to request flexible working hours from the available scheduling options. However, it may not be possible to accommodate all such requests for alternative schedules as the agency’s needs must be the first priority.

“Non-Fixed” Flextime will be applicable and may be “approved” for full-time exempt SERC employees who work early mornings, evening sessions, or weekend sessions sponsored or requested by SERC. This time must be completed within the applicable payroll period.

Flexible scheduling arrangements may be precluded for an employee under circumstances whereby attendance, performance, and/or productivity is unsatisfactory or when agency operational needs so require.

For questions about flexible working hours, see the ADP employee website or contact the Human Resources Manager. The agency may terminate this policy at its sole discretion with or without notice.

Work from Home

Work from Home is a recognized flexible working arrangement currently offered to employees of SERC. Some positions may have job-related functions with responsibilities that by nature, preclude or limit work from home arrangements. The parameters for scheduling work from home time are fully articulated on the ADP employee website. Questions and additional guidance about this policy may be directed to the supervisor or the Human Resources Manager.

Note - Work from home scheduling arrangements are subject to the discretion of an employee’s supervisor. Work from home time may be precluded based on particular circumstances and agency needs. The agency may terminate or modify this policy at its sole discretion with or without notice.

Paydays/Compensation Schedule

The business week for purposes of calculating wages begins Monday and ends on Friday. Employees are paid on a biweekly basis. SERC is required by applicable federal and state

laws to withhold certain deductions from employee paychecks. This includes income taxes and FICA contributions (Social Security and Medicare) as well as any other deductions required under law or by court order for wage garnishments. Employees may also authorize voluntary deductions from a paycheck, to include contributions for insurance premiums, spending accounts, or other services. Deductions will be reflected in the pay statement. SERC does not advance payroll funds or offer payroll loans.

Employees will be paid through direct deposit. Employees must complete the appropriate forms with the Human Resources Manager in order to initiate direct deposit. Employees are required to notify SERC of any pay discrepancies as soon as possible.

Pay Raises

Depending on SERC's financial health and other factors, at SERC's sole discretion, efforts will be made to give pay raises consistent with profitability and cost-of-living increases. SERC may also make individual pay raises based on merit or due to a change of job position. Additional changes to salary may be made at the discretion of the Executive Director with approval from SERC's Board of Directors.

Timecards

Applicable laws require SERC to keep accurate records of hours worked by all employees, and particularly non-exempt and hourly employees. All employees must accurately record their time worked in the SERC automated timecard program and submit them on a biweekly basis to their supervisor for review and approval. Employees are required to notify SERC of any pay discrepancies and unrecorded or misrecorded work hours as soon as possible.

Compensatory Time-Off

SERC is committed to fair and equitable compensation when full-time exempt employees must work extended hours beyond a 40-hour work week due to the nature of activities, services, or needs of the agency. Occasionally, it may be necessary for full-time exempt employees to put in additional time at the office or at home. Such additional time is considered part of an employee's responsibilities and commensurate with their salaried employment with the agency and is *not* compensatory time. There is no obligation for SERC to grant compensatory time-off to exempt employees.

After working a regular 7.5-hour work day or a 40-hour work week, with supervisory discretion, compensatory time may be awarded on a prorated basis to full-time exempt employees who have worked an evening or weekend session or beyond the agency's core business hours as sponsored or requested by SERC. The preferred option is for supervisors to approve flex-time during the biweekly pay period for said employees.

Only regular full-time exempt employees are eligible to earn and use compensatory time benefits. Compensatory time is not available to supervisors, including Directors.

Compensatory time must be used within the fiscal quarter that it is awarded. Compensatory time cannot be carried over from one fiscal quarter into the next or from one fiscal year into the next. Any unused compensatory time shall not be paid to an employee in the event of termination of employment. Employee should refer to the Policy Guidelines on the ADP employee website for parameters concerning the award and use of compensatory time.

Overtime for Non-Exempt Employees

Non-exempt employees are entitled to be paid overtime compensation in accordance with applicable wage and hour laws for hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a given work week. The employee's supervisor must approve any overtime hours **prior** to working said hours. Non-exempt employees are not eligible to receive compensatory time.

Travel and Business Expense Reimbursement Policy

SERC will reimburse travel and business expenses for work-related travel. Employees are responsible for accurately tracking, calculating, and reporting travel time and travel and business expenses.

If use of an employee's personal vehicle is required for business purposes, SERC will reimburse employees at the mileage rate set by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Tolls and parking fees are also reimbursable. However, SERC will not reimburse employees for expenses not necessary for business purposes, such as:

- Parking tickets.
- Vehicle repairs and maintenance.
- Fines for moving violations.
- Vehicle towing charges.

Employees using a personal vehicle for business purposes should ensure that their automobile insurance covers business travel.

If an employee is traveling out-of-state for SERC-related business which involves travel other than by car and/or which involves staying out-of-state overnight, such travel and related-expenses must be approved by the employee's immediate supervisor in advance. Employees will be reimbursed other ordinary and reasonably priced ground, rail, and air transportation as needed for SERC-related business. Employees are expected to choose the lowest, most reasonable travel fare available, taking into account preferred arrival and departure times, applicable connection times, and other restrictions, including cancellation and change fees. For SERC-related overnight business travel, SERC will reimburse employees for the cost of standard accommodations in a reasonably priced hotel for overnight stays during business trips. Employees seeking reimbursement for lodging expenses must submit an itemized hotel receipt or statement which indicates that full payment has been made and contains:

- The name and location of the hotel or other lodging.
- The date or dates of the employee's stay.
- Separately stated charges for lodging, meals, telephone, and other expenses.

Employees should refer to the ADP employee website for detailed information about allowable expenses and rate of reimbursement, as well as submitting a travel expense report. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Human Resources Manager.

SECTION- PAID TIME OFF

Paid Time Off

Paid Time Off is defined as vacation, sick, or personal time. Paid Time Off is accrued at regularly scheduled biweekly earning intervals (with the exception of personal time, which is immediately available for use at the fiscal year changeover). The accrual rate begins on the date of hire and is prorated by fiscal year.

Eligibility

Part-time employees are only eligible to accrue sick time per the Connecticut Paid Sick Leave Act (PSLA) as noted in the Sick Time Policy section of this Handbook. Part-time employees are not eligible to accrue vacation or personal time. SERC will not retaliate against employees who request or take leave in accordance with this policy. For further clarification about agency paid time-off, see Human Resources.

Holiday Observances

The agency generally will observe holidays in keeping with the State of Connecticut. Employees should refer to policy guidelines on the ADP employee website.

Vacation Pay/Vacation Time

Vacation Pay

Employees receive paid vacation benefits commensurate with their base rate of pay. No incentives, bonuses, or overtime are used in the calculation of vacation pay.

Vacation Time Accrual

The agency provides the following vacation time for eligible full-time employees. Vacation time accrues on a biweekly basis throughout the course of a fiscal year.

Years of Employment	Maximum Vacation Accrued per Fiscal Year
Up to 5 years	112.5 hours (15 days)
5 years up to 10 years	135 hours (18 days)
10 years up to 15 years	157.5 hours (21 days)
15 years or more	180 hours (24 days)

New employees must complete at least 30 calendar days of service before they are eligible to take any paid vacation, although the Executive Director reserves the right to consider otherwise. Part-time and temporary employees are ineligible for paid vacation.

Vacation time may be taken only with the **prior approval** of the employee's supervisor. Approval of vacation schedules is based primarily on the needs of the agency. If there are numerous requests from individuals for the same days off, most notably during high-volume work periods, supervisors will consider various factors, including seniority, business needs, and the time/date that the request was made in determining which (if any) requests will be approved. Employee notification of their absence due to vacation time-off must be communicated to colleagues whose work may be affected by their absence. Requests submitted that are not in compliance with vacation time approval parameters will be examined on a case-by-case basis, and are not guaranteed to be approved. Employees should refer to policy guidelines on the ADP employee website.

Unused vacation time may not be converted into cash in lieu of taking the actual time off, except on termination or retirement. Employees who provide advance notice of their termination or retirement, and who work through their final termination date. Employees will be paid for any accrued unused paid time off through their last day of actual work; however no vacation carryover will be paid upon termination of employment.

Vacation Time Advancement

Full-time employees may advance up to 37.5 hours of vacation time in the current fiscal year. In the event that employment is either terminated or an employee resigns from employment prior to having earned sufficient time to cover any advanced time, the employee must repay any remaining unearned balance at the time of termination by allowing SERC to deduct any amount owed from the final employee paycheck. Employees should contact the Human Resources Manager for additional information and to review and sign the CT Department of Labor's "Authorization for Repayment of Advance for Vacation Pay or Paid Time-Off" form.

Vacation Time Carryover

An employee may automatically carry over a maximum of 37.5 hours of accrued and unused vacation time into the next fiscal year. All managing supervisors with direct reports may automatically carry over up to 75 hours of accrued and unused vacation time into the next fiscal year.

Additional vacation time carryover will be at the sole discretion of the Executive Director. Vacation carryover will not be paid upon termination of employment.

Sick Time

Full-time employees are eligible for 112.5 hours (15 days) of paid sick time per fiscal year accrued on a biweekly basis.

Under the Connecticut Paid Sick Leave Act (PSLA), part-time employees will be eligible to accrue one hour of sick time for every 40 hours worked per fiscal year (hours worked means actual hours worked). A part-time employee must have worked at SERC for at least 680 hours to be eligible for sick leave accrual. The part-time employee can only use a maximum of 40 hours of sick time per year no matter how many total hours are accrued. **Note** - Temporary employees are not eligible for paid sick time.

Employees will be able to utilize only accrued sick time. **Exceptions** - Full-time employees may be advanced up to 40 hours of accrued sick time in the current fiscal year. Employees within the initial 90 days of their on-boarding period may be advanced up to 18.75 hours (2.5 days) of accrued sick time. The granting and use of either of these exceptions will be applied against an employee's total eligible sick time hours earned throughout the course of the fiscal year.

This policy may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for special circumstances.

Employees can carry over a maximum of 40 hours of any accrued unused sick time from one fiscal year to the next.

Earned, but unused, sick time will not be paid upon termination of employment. In the event that employment is terminated voluntarily or involuntarily prior to the employee's having earned sufficient time to cover any advanced time, the employee must repay any remaining unearned balance at the time of termination by allowing SERC to deduct any amount owed from the final employee paycheck. See the Human Resources Manager for additional information.

Retaliation for requesting or using sick leave for which the employee is eligible is prohibited under Connecticut law. An employee has the right to file a complaint with the Labor Commissioner for any alleged violation of the Connecticut PSLA.

Use of Sick Time under the Leave from Employment for Victims of Family Violence Act

An employee who is a victim of family violence or sexual assault may take up to 15 paid sick days (not to exceed the maximum accrued amount) or a maximum of 12 days of unpaid leave during a calendar year to:

- 1) Seek medical care or counseling for any psychological or other physical injury or disability;
- 2) Obtain services from a victim services organization;
- 3) Relocate due to the family violence;
- 4) Participate in civil or criminal proceedings related to the family violence.

For approval of use of sick time for this purpose, please contact the Human Resources Manager. An employee who takes leave under these provisions must provide the Human Resources Manager with a signed written statement certifying that the leave is for a purpose authorized by this Act. Any information shared will be kept confidential as allowable by law.

Emergency Closings/Inclement Weather

Emergency Closing

SERC maintains the practice of remaining open during inclement weather unless the severity of weather and travel-related conditions necessitates an agency closing or the Office of the Governor of the State of Connecticut announces a directed closing.

Inclement Weather Work from Home Day

SERC will continue to be responsive to stakeholders, while precluding the need for driving to and from the office when road conditions are deemed to be hazardous. The determination of whether and to what extent road conditions are deemed to be hazardous is in the sole discretion of SERC. Staff will be notified that an Inclement Weather Work from Home Day is being implemented by an opt-in text message, email, and by calling the internal inclement weather extension #367. Any questions should be directed to your immediate supervisor.

Section F--TIME OFF/LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Vacation Time Planning and Approval

Vacation time may be taken only with the **prior approval** of the employee's supervisor. Approval of vacation schedules is based primarily on the needs of the agency. If there are numerous requests from individuals for the same days off, most notably during high-volume work periods, supervisors will consider various factors, including seniority, business needs, and the time/date that the request was made in determining which (if any) requests will be approved. Employee notification of their absence due to vacation time-off must be communicated to colleagues whose work may be affected by their absence.

Requests submitted that are not in compliance with vacation time approval parameters will be examined on a case-by-case basis, and have a risk of not being approved. Refer to policy guidelines on the ADP employee website.

Sick Leave Bank Donation and Use

SERC recognizes that employees may have a family emergency or a personal crisis that causes a severe impact to them resulting in a need for additional time off in excess of their

available accrued sick/vacation/personal time. To this end, SERC implements a Sick Leave Bank. All eligible employees may donate sick time from their unused balance to the bank for future eligible co-workers in need in accordance with the guidelines. Donated time will be collected in the “Sick Leave Bank,” which will be available as a source of additional sick time when staff members are experiencing a very serious or catastrophic situation in which all other options have been exhausted. The Sick Leave Bank shall reside, and be monitored by, the Human Resources Office. Any unused time in the Sick Leave Bank will **not** be carried forward from year to year. The bank expires each fiscal year on June 30.

This program is not an additional leave entitlement or benefit, but rather a means of allowing employees to assist colleagues in need.

SERC reserves the right to end this program at any point during its implementation.

Eligibility - Employees who donate sick time must be employed with SERC for a minimum of one year. Additionally, employees requesting use of the Sick Leave Bank must have used all available leave allotments of accrued sick, vacation, and personal time. Staff members who are out on an approved Workers’ Compensation or Short Term/Long Term Disability are not eligible for this benefit.

Staff approved to use the Sick Leave Bank may receive no more than 480 hours (12 weeks) within a rolling 12-month period.

Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

SERC is a covered employer under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). It is SERC’s policy to grant unpaid family and medical leaves in accordance with the provisions of the FMLA. FMLA leave is unpaid. An employee is eligible to take unpaid FMLA leave if the employee has worked at SERC for 12 months and at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months to be eligible.

FMLA leave may be taken for any of the following reasons:

- the birth of the eligible employee’s child and in order to care for that child (leave to be completed within one year of the child's birth);
- the placement of a child with the eligible employee for adoption or foster care and in order to care for the newly placed son or daughter (leave to be completed within one year of the child's placement);
- to care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition;
- to care for the eligible employee’s own serious health condition, which renders the employee unable to perform any of the essential functions of your position; or
- a qualifying exigency of a spouse, child, or parent who is a military member on covered active duty or called to covered active duty status (or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty).

Eligible employees may take up to 26 weeks of unpaid FMLA leave in a single 12-month period, beginning on the first day that the eligible employee takes FMLA leave to care for a spouse, child, parent or next of kin who is a covered service member and who has a serious injury or illness related to active duty service, as defined by the FMLA's regulations (known as military caregiver leave).

For the purposes of FMLA leave, SERC uses the “calendar year method” to calculate leave.

FMLA leave will run *concurrently* with other types of leave, like accrued vacation time that is substituted for unpaid FMLA leave and any state family leave laws, to the extent allowed by state law.

When practical and foreseeable, an employee must provide 30 days advance notice of the need to take leave. If the employee is requesting leave because of the employee's own or a covered relative's serious health condition, the employee and the relevant health care provider must supply appropriate medical certification. Employees may obtain Medical Certification forms from the Human Resources Manager. When the employee requests leave, SERC will notify the employee of the requirement for medical certification and when it is due (at least 15 days after the request for leave). If the employee provides at least 30 days' notice of medical leave, the employee should also provide the medical certification before leave begins. Failure to provide requested medical certification in a timely manner may result in denial of FMLA-covered leave until it is provided.

SERC also reserves the right to require certification from a covered military member's health care provider if the employee is requesting military caregiver leave and certification in connection with military exigency leave.

During approved FMLA leave, SERC will maintain the employee's health benefits as if the employee continued to be actively employed. If paid leave is substituted for unpaid FMLA leave, SERC will deduct the employee's portion of the health plan premium as a regular payroll deduction. If the leave is unpaid, employees must pay their portion of the premium. An employee's health care coverage will cease if the premium payment is more than 30 days late. If the payment is more than 15 days late, SERC will send the employee a letter to this effect. If SERC does not receive the outstanding premium payment within 15 days after the date of this letter, the employee's coverage may cease. If the employee elects not to return to work for at least 30 calendar days at the end of the leave period, the employee will be required to reimburse SERC for the cost of the health benefit premiums paid by SERC for maintaining coverage during the unpaid leave, unless the employee cannot return to work because of a serious health condition or other circumstances beyond the employee's control. SERC will be entitled to recover premiums paid to maintain health insurance coverage for an employee who fails to return to work from leave.

Intermittent Family and Medical Leave and Reduced Leave Schedules

If medically necessary, leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule..

The intermittent or reduced leave schedule will not exceed the 12-week FMLA parameter. FMLA leave may also be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule for a qualifying exigency relating to covered military service

If leave is unpaid, SERC will reduce the employee's salary based on the amount of time actually worked. In addition, while the employee is on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule, SERC may temporarily transfer the employee to an available alternative position that better accommodates the employee's leave schedule and has equivalent pay and benefits.

Return to Work After FMLA

In general, any employee who returns to work from a family and medical leave within, or on, the business day following the expiration of the 12-week period, as applicable, is entitled to return to their job or an equivalent position. If leave was taken due to the serious medical condition of the employee, the employee may be required to provide a medical certification to the HR Office that the employee is able to return to work and is fit for duty. An employee who fails to return to work, or is not able to return to work, may be subject to termination of employment.

Questions/More Information About FMLA Leave

Employees who believe that they have an FMLA-qualifying need for leave should contact the Human Resources Manager to receive information regarding their eligibility. If the leave will be designated as FMLA-protected, the employee will be informed as to the amount of leave to be applied against their leave entitlement. If ineligible, the employee will be informed as to the reason for non-qualification.

Pregnancy

Employees who are experiencing a pregnancy-related disability may be eligible for medical leave. Please contact the Human Resources Manager for more information about pregnancy disability leave.

Lactation/Breastfeeding

Pursuant to Connecticut and federal law, SERC will provide employees with break time and a private space to express breast milk during working hours. SERC will make reasonable efforts to provide designated accessible rooms for employees to express milk. Employees should contact the Human Resources Manager or the ADP employee website for specific information as to this policy.

Personal or Administrative Leave of Absence

Personal leaves of absence may be granted to full-time employees at the discretion of the

Executive Director, and all requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. An employee generally must exhaust other available types of leave (e.g., vacation and personal time, etc.) before a personal leave of absence may be granted. Personal leaves of absence are unpaid and may be combined with available time off. Requests for an unpaid personal leave of absence should be submitted in writing to one's supervisor and the Human Resources Manager as soon as possible in advance of the requested leave.

Administrative leaves of absence (either paid or unpaid) may be necessary due to legal or personal matters that may negatively impact the Agency or an employee's performance.

Accrual of vacation and sick time will be suspended while an employee is on a personal leave of absence. Holidays are unpaid (see Compensation and Time-Off). An employee on an unpaid personal leave of absence may elect to continue employer-sponsored health and dental benefits, if any, pursuant to applicable state and federal benefit continuation laws such as COBRA and will be responsible for the timely payment of premiums. Access to any increase in compensation is not available to employees while they are on a leave of absence.

When a leave ends, every reasonable effort will be made to return the employee to the same position, if it is available, or to a similar position for which the employee is qualified. However, SERC cannot guarantee reinstatement in all cases. An employee who fails to report to work promptly at the expiration of the leave period may be considered to have voluntarily terminated their employment.

Bereavement

The agency will provide a maximum paid bereavement leave of up to 5 total days per fiscal year for full-time employees to make arrangements and/or attend the memorial service/funeral for a family member (defined as a spouse, child, parent (including parent-in-law), grandparent or grandchild, sibling, or any other individual related to the employee by blood or affinity whose close association the employee shows to be the equivalent of those family relationships).

Jury Duty and Witness Leave

It is part of our duty as citizens to fulfill jury duty commitments as necessary. Under Connecticut law, employers are required to pay employees who work at least 30 hours per week their regular wages for up to 5 days of jury duty, or any part thereof.¹

Jurors who are not entitled to wages from an employer may be eligible for the current statutorily capped per-day reimbursement amount from the state for necessary out-of-pocket expenses, such as mileage and child care, for the first 5 days. All jurors serving more than 5 days will be reimbursed by the state at the applicable daily rate. At all times, during jury duty leave, employee benefits are continued.

Employees summoned by a subpoena to appear as a witness in court, to attend a court

proceeding, or to participate in a police investigation related to a criminal case in which the employee (or their immediate family) is a crime victim should make scheduling arrangements with their supervisor as soon as the subpoena is received. Generally, under the law, this leave is unpaid; however, employees may elect to use personal or vacation time to comply with the court-ordered requirements. SERC will abide by all applicable laws as related to leave for this purpose.

Military Leave

Employees will be granted military leave in accordance with all applicable laws. This policy is intended to comply with SERC's obligations under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). To the extent there is any conflict between this policy and the minimum requirements of USERRA, the applicable provision of the USERRA shall apply.

Unless otherwise required by law, military leave is unpaid. Employees may choose, at their option, to utilize any accrued vacation or personal time to cover any period of unpaid military leave to the extent allowed by law.

Reinstatement After Military Leave

For military service of less than 31 days, a service member must return to work at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled work period on the first full day after release from service, which accounts for safe travel home plus an eight-hour rest period. For service of more than 30 days, but less than 181 days, the service member must submit an application for reemployment no later than 14 days of release from service. For service of more than 180 days, an application for reemployment must be submitted not later than 90 days of release from service. Employees should refer to the guidelines regarding reinstatement after military leave on the ADP employee website for further information.

Volunteer Firefighter/Ambulance Service Member

SERC will not discharge or discriminate against employees who are active volunteer firefighters or members of a volunteer ambulance service or company who come to work late or miss work because they responded to a fire or ambulance call before or during their regular work hours. If employees need to take leave to respond to a fire or ambulance call, they should notify the Human Resources Manager.

Employees must prove your status as an active volunteer firefighter or member of a volunteer ambulance service or company by submitting a written statement signed by the head of the volunteer fire department or ambulance service or company. SERC may also require employees to verify that they did respond to a fire or ambulance call, specifying the date, time, and duration of the response.

Employees should make every reasonable effort to inform their supervisor when they may be late or absent due to responding to a fire or ambulance call. If unable to do so, the

employee should provide a written statement, signed by the head of the volunteer fire department or ambulance service or company explaining why the employee could not do so.

Section G--BENEFITS AND BENEFIT PROGRAMS

Medical, Dental and Vision Care Insurance

SERC currently offers a comprehensive array of insurance benefits provided through the State of Connecticut known as CT Partnership 2.0. These benefits may change from time to time and are too lengthy to cover in this Handbook. A *brief summary* of the benefits follows. Additional information is also available on the ADP website and is provided by Human Resources at the time of enrollment, and to the extent anything in this Handbook may conflict with the plan documents themselves, the plan documents will prevail.

Please note, for any and all benefits elected, employees will be fully responsible for the balance of the premium cost that will be automatically deducted each payroll period.

Medical

SERC presently offers medical insurance for qualifying full-time employees and their eligible dependents. All qualifying employees become eligible to enroll in the program on the first of the month after being employed full-time for 30 days.

Qualifying employees must be regularly scheduled to work at least 37.5 hours per week, and all supporting documentation will be required at the time of enrollment (e.g., marriage or civil union certification, birth certification, etc.). Employees who miss the window of opportunity to enroll after their first 30 days of employment must wait until the next enrollment eligibility period to join unless impacted by a “qualifying life event.” Qualifying events include resignation, termination of employment, death of an employee, reduction in hours, a leave of absence, divorce or legal separation, entitlement to Medicare, or when a dependent child no longer meets eligibility requirements. Medical plan benefits for eligible employees and their dependents are described in detail and provided to the employee during the on-boarding process. These benefits may be canceled or changed at SERC’s discretion, unless otherwise required by law.

Dental

SERC presently offers dental insurance for qualifying full-time employees and their eligible dependents. All qualifying employees become eligible to enroll in the program on the first of the month after being employed full-time for 90 days.

Vision

SERC presently offers vision coverage for qualifying full-time employees and their eligible dependents. All qualifying full-time SERC employees and their eligible family members

may elect coverage at their own cost. All qualifying employees become eligible to enroll in the program on the first of the month after being employed full-time for 90 days.

COBRA

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) provides eligible employees and their beneficiaries with the option to continue health insurance coverage under SERC's health plan when a "qualifying event" could result in the loss of eligibility. Qualifying events include resignation, termination of employment, death of an employee, reduction in hours, a leave of absence, divorce or legal separation, entitlement to Medicare, or when a dependent child no longer meets eligibility requirements. Please contact Human Resources to learn more about COBRA rights.

Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for Medical and Dependent Care

Under current IRS regulations, a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) allows a full-time employee the option to set aside pre-tax dollars to be used as reimbursement for out-of-pocket medical and/or dependent care expenses. This is a voluntary program. An employee who elects to participate can annually set aside a fixed amount of pre-tax dollars. The amount is then divided by the number of pay periods in a plan year and deducted from the employee's paycheck pre-tax. The funds must be used during the plan year for the purposes intended and only for applicable expenses. A limited amount can be rolled over into the next plan year; however, any remaining funds beyond the maximum roll-over allowance will be forfeited.

Reimbursable expenses can be for the full-time employee or for the employee's IRS-defined dependent(s) even if the dependent(s) are not covered under the employee's medical or dental plan. An employee does not need to be enrolled in the agency's health or dental plan in order to participate in the spending account. Examples of eligible medical expenses include: co-payments, over the counter medications, crutches, and eyeglasses. A complete listing of allowable expenses can be found on the ADP employee website. SERC does not make any determination as to which expenses are covered and not covered for the purposes of an FSA. Employees with questions should reach out to Human Resources for further information regarding the program.

Group Life Insurance

All qualifying full-time employees become eligible to enroll in the program on the first of the month after being employed full-time for 90 days. Qualifying employees must be regularly scheduled to work at least 37.5 hours per week.

Full-time SERC employees who reach the age of 65 will see a 35% reduction in coverage as per the existing policy rider. If an employee works until age 70, the coverage reduces to \$5,000.

Disability Leave/Short-Term and Long-Term

All full-time employees are eligible to participate in SERC's Short Term Disability (STD) Plan or Long Term Disability (LTD) Plan. Employees are not eligible for LTD until they have been employed at SERC for a minimum of one year. Employees with four or more years of service may receive additional benefits. Please see Human Resources for more information.

Employees requesting disability leave due their own health conditions will be granted disability leave status only if they are approved to receive disability income benefits under the SERC STD Plan or LTD Plan as determined by the applicable Claims Administrator. The terms and conditions for each plan is outlined in the applicable plan documents, which can be located on the ADP employee website.

Returning from Disability Leave

As a condition of reinstatement following disability leave, employees must obtain at their own expense written certification from their health care provider supporting their ability to return to full or partially restricted duty. Employees will not be reinstated to their employment unless and until the employee provides the requested documentation.

Approved Workers' Compensation

Employees on leaves of absence due to job-related illnesses or injuries whose claims for workers' compensation benefits are approved by the Claims Administrator will be provided benefits as allowed under law. If an employee is on approved workers' compensation leave and is also eligible for FMLA, both types of leaves will run concurrently.

This policy applies to all SERC employees regardless of employee classification. As of January 31, 2012, approved workers' compensation benefits will be administered according to the Connecticut statutory scheme. Employees who have questions regarding approved workers' compensation should speak with the Human Resources Manager.

Retirement

Full-time SERC employees having reached age 59 ½ years with a minimum of 10 consecutive years of full-time service immediately preceding retirement can access the following retirement benefits:

- The retiree can continue to participate in full group medical benefits; however, the retiree must pay the full applicable rate for self and for eligible dependents. At age 65, retirees are eligible to participate in Medicare, which we encourage retirees to explore.
- Dental benefits will be continued for the retiree and eligible dependents. There is no age limit. Coverage is subject to the provisions of the basic policy.
- Life insurance is continued at 35% of the pre-retirement level, reducing to \$5,000

at age 70 and continuing for life.

Any full-time employee who participated in SERC's 403(b) annuity is entitled to a distribution from their account plan. An employee entitled to a distribution may elect to receive the distribution directly, or to roll over the distribution to another retirement plan.

403(b) Tax-Sheltered Annuity Plan

The agency maintains a 403(b) tax-sheltered annuity plan for qualified full-time employees. In general, employees are eligible to participate in the plan following the completion of 6 months of continuous service. Employees also must be at least 18 years of age and complete at least 1,000 hours of service per year to be eligible to participate.

For details and questions concerning the draw, annuity (including eligibility requirements) and plan documents, please see the Human Resources Manager. To the extent anything in this Handbook conflicts with the plan documents themselves, the plan documents prevail.

Teachers' Retirement System (TRS)

The TRS is a state-funded defined benefit retirement system for professional employees employed by Connecticut public schools. It covers employees who: (1) hold positions requiring a teaching certificate or permit issued by the State Board of Education; (2) hold the appropriate certification for their position; and (3) are employed at least half-time. Being employed by a "public school" for purposes of the TRS includes those who meet the foregoing definition and are employed by, among others, the State Board of Education (SBE), the Board of Governors of Higher Education or any higher education constituent unit, the Connecticut Children's Center, and other state institutions that employ teachers.

Teachers' Retirement System

Connecticut law extends membership in the TRS to professional staff employed by SERC who have certificates or permits issued by the SBE. The law also allows TRS members to purchase credit for pre-July 1, 2007 service with SERC.

Teachers' Retirement Board (TRB)

Connecticut law includes the SERC as a Public School for purposes of the Teacher's Retirement System. Individuals who meet our definition of teacher in an institution that is considered a Public School in Connecticut are members of our system and are mandated to participate in our system with few exceptions. As a result, SERC employees in TRB are subject to the same provisions and regulations as any other member in a different district or system.

As long as a SERC employee continues to work at least half-time with SERC, they would be required to continue contributing to the TRB and is unable to remove her regular

contributions or interest.

SERC professional staff previously members of the TRB are eligible to continue membership in the Connecticut Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).

Connecticut Teachers' Retirement Board

165 Capitol Avenue

Hartford, CT 06106-1673

Toll-Free: 1-800-504-1102

<https://portal.ct.gov/trb>

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

SERC's Employee Assistance Program provides employees with access to confidential counseling services to help with personal, legal, financial, and other work/life issues. This benefit program is applicable to all SERC employees, their spouses or life partners, and eligible dependents with the exception of temporary employees and independent contractors. These services are provided through a third-party vendor, **KGA Employee Counseling**. Contact **KGA Employee Assistance** at **800.648.9557** or **My.KGALifeServices.com**.

Employees who have questions about the EAP should discuss them with the Human Resources Manager, and additional resources can be found on our ADP website.

If any discrepancy exists between this summary and the EAP documents, the EAP documents will prevail.