

## Division of Public Assistance Professional Standards and Workplace Expectations

Each employee of the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) has a responsibility to know, to understand and to abide by fundamental professional standards and workplace expectations that support a positive work environment and promote the highest possible standards of professionalism within the Division. The Standards and Expectations that follow set a standard for orienting new employees to our organizational culture and serve to remind each employee of their role and responsibility in supporting a productive and healthy workplace.

**I. Professional Conduct** - Regardless of where you work in the Division of Public Assistance what you do is very important and ultimately touches the lives of many who are in crisis. Every day you interact with a wide range of internal and external customers and in each contact and conversation, you become the face of DPA. Our customers, co-workers and partners rely on the quality and timeliness of our work and on our professionalism. As a result, every member of the DPA team holds high standards of conduct and considers themselves a professional capable of meeting the needs and expectations of the people we serve and the public at large.

➤ **Customer Service**

- ✓ Know your internal and external customers. If you are not certain who your customers are, please ask your direct supervisor.
- ✓ Provide exemplary service to all customers.
- ✓ Respond to requests for assistance and other inquiries in a timely manner and provide helpful advice with options when readily available.

➤ **Courtesy**

- ✓ Be kind, courteous, professional, and respectful to customers, co-workers, direct reports, supervisors, managers, external partners, and the public.
- ✓ Be cordial to your co-workers and supervisors/managers. Use "please" and "thank you."
- ✓ Refrain from behaviors, actions, or language constituting workplace harassment or bullying. Any form of workplace harassment or bullying is unacceptable conduct.
- ✓ Value diversity and value each other.

➤ **Ethics**

- ✓ Conduct yourself according to the highest ethical standards and promote an environment of public trust that is free from conflicts of interest, fraud, abuse of authority, and misuse of public property.

➤ **Safety**

- ✓ Ensure your family has a disaster preparedness plan.
- ✓ Complete the web-based training on DPA's Disaster Response to learn about DPA's Disaster and Emergency Response Procedures
- ✓ Follow all safety directives of the Department of Health and Social Services and Department of Administration.
- ✓ Use good judgment in decision-making and follow safety guidelines where appropriate. If there is a question on the appropriate course of action, clarify the question with your supervisor before proceeding.
- ✓ No pets are allowed in the workplace. Service animals are not pets.

➤ **Teamwork**

- ✓ Work as a team for the good of the Division's and the Department's mission.
- ✓ Share information and good ideas to improve operations and outcomes.
- ✓ Celebrate each other's achievements to promote the success of our division.
- ✓ Be receptive to constructive feedback.
- ✓ Be open to input from your co-workers, direct reports, and supervisors/managers.
- ✓ Seek help when you need it and give help when asked.

➤ **Responsibility and Accountability**

- ✓ Meet commitments and deadlines.
- ✓ Be "work focused"; dependable and accountable; productive.
- ✓ Take care of personal needs and business during your breaks and lunch period.

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- ✓ Keep your supervisor informed of any problems or issues so he/she is aware of them before hearing from a customer or co-workers.
- ✓ Notify your supervisor as far in advance as possible when you think you may not meet a deadline.
- ✓ Follow instructions and directions given by a supervisor or a manager in a timely and respectful manner. If you have questions or need clarification, ask well before the deadline of the project.
- **Confidentiality**
  - ✓ Be familiar with all the policies surrounding confidentiality and abide by them.
  - ✓ Complete the HIPAA training course.
  - ✓ Maintain confidential information whether verbal, written, faxed, photographic, or electronic in a manner that safeguards its privacy.
  - ✓ Do not discuss, leave or display confidential information in open or public areas such as in elevators, hallways, lobbies, food areas or electronic sites with unrestricted access (i.e., scanner).
  - ✓ Lock or log off your computer when you leave your workstation.
- **Professionalism – A professional:**
  - ✓ Is knowledgeable about our business
  - ✓ Conducts business and complete tasks proficiently
  - ✓ Represents DPA in a professional manner
  - ✓ Holds honesty and integrity as essential character traits
  - ✓ Maintains a positive attitude
  - ✓ Aspires to excellence
  - ✓ Values personal competency and the competency of co-workers
  - ✓ Relies on DPA's Mission, Vision, Core Values and Workplace Expectations to guide conduct
  - ✓ Reports to work properly attired and with good hygiene.
    - Wear casual business or formal business attire when appropriate.
    - Workplace attire is neat, clean, in good repair and appropriate for the work performed and for the setting in which work is done.
    - Provocative clothing and clothing with words, terms, or pictures that may be offensive to other employees and the public is not worn in the workplace
    - Dress in footwear appropriate to the business setting (Flip flops and slippers are inappropriate unless for medical accommodation. Bare feet or socks only is never appropriate).
    - Hats are not worn in the workplace unless it is for religious or medical reasons. Please discuss these exceptions with your supervisor.
    - If you are unsure if a certain article of clothing is inappropriate for the workplace, it is best not to wear it. Keep in mind that some employees are particularly sensitive to perfumes and colognes.
    - Staff may be instructed to return home to dress appropriately or address hygiene concerns.
  - ✓ Seeks professional and personal growth opportunities and attends training that enhance professional behavior such as: Valuing Diversity, Respectful Workplace, and other professional development courses.

## II. Time and Attendance

Be at your desk ready to work when your scheduled workday begins. Continual flexing of the workday to accommodate habitual tardiness is not permissible. Supervisors may require a leave slip for tardiness of 15 minutes or more and repeated tardiness (even if less than 15 minutes) will be dealt with as a performance issue.

When away from the office, it is the division's policy that the message on your telephone and your email "out of office assistant" notify people that you are out of the office and will indicate when you will be returning and whom to contact in your absence. You must also make sure to note your absence on your personal calendar and the shared calendar of your supervisor's choice. It is a professional courtesy, as a member of a team, to inform your teammates of upcoming approved planned leave.

The State bases your pay on the time and attendance data on the timesheet and leave slips you complete at the end of each pay period. The timesheet accounts for all hours in the pay period and must be verified and approved by your supervisor. Timesheets must reflect your "actual hours worked" during the pay period. If you are unsure of what this means, please seek clarification from your direct supervisor.

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**Attendance** - Punctual, regular and predictable attendance is expected and required according to your work schedule. The official time for the division is reflected on your desktop computer. State business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You will work the required 7.5 hours within the core working hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is DPA's standard work schedule. You must have written confirmation (email, memo) or other specific approval (i.e., travel) from your supervisor before using a different work schedule. Before starting a non-standard work schedule a copy of the email or memo describing the agreed upon work schedule, a signed agreement for an official flex schedule, or other agreed upon work schedule must be filed in your supervisory file, personnel file, and provided to Human Resources.

- a. **Sick time** - You must discuss with your supervisor or lead how they would like you to report a personal illness that prevents you from reporting to work (e.g. phone call and speak directly to the supervisor, leave a voice message on the supervisor's phone, send a text message, or contact another staff designated by the supervisor). The important thing is make contact before your assigned workday begins.

If a circumstance beyond your control (i.e. incoherent or incapacitated as substantiated by a physician, accident report, etc.) does not allow you to call before the work day begins, call as soon as physically possible or have another person call for you.

When you call in sick and there are outstanding tasks or meetings you were to complete that day, make an effort to inform your supervisor so they can arrange for the work to be shared with other staff, reschedule the meeting, or otherwise attend to the issue in your absence.

You must complete a leave slip immediately upon your return and have it signed by the supervisor.

- b. **Overtime** – Overtime must be approved in advance. In addition, there may be a need for employees to work mandatory overtime depending upon business needs.
- c. **Non-Standard Work Hours** - You must have advance approval from your supervisor to be inside the building (including weekends and holidays) during times other than your normal assigned working hours. Your presence in the building must be for work related reasons only.
- d. **Key Card/Keys** - Usage is limited to each card/key holder. Having key card/keys is a privilege and not a right. Any person entering the building before or after normal business hours is required to have approval from their supervisor. Key card holders approved to be in the building during non-standard hours must swipe the card even if door is held open by another employee. If it is the established protocol for the building, you must sign in or out of the building when entering or exiting the building before or after normal business hours. If you enter the building outside of normal business hours without approval, you may lose key card or key privileges.  
**NOTE:** Members of the public are not permitted to access the building before or after hours without prior arrangement from upper management.
- e. **Union Stewards**- All Union related activities must abide by the specific Union contracts and the Interpretative Memorandum RE: Representatives and Stewards> this memorandum can be found on the Division of Personnel & Labor Relations website.

### III. Lunch Breaks & Relief Periods (breaks)

A lunch break of no less than 30 minutes or no more than one hour is allowed approximately midway of each shift. Schedule your lunch break with your direct supervisor and do not deviate from it without prior approval from your supervisor.

You are allowed one relief period during the first half of the shift and one relief period during the second half of the shift. A normal relief period is 15 minutes. Relief periods are paid breaks. Therefore, they cannot be added to a lunch break to extend the time or used at the end of the day to leave your shift early. When taking your break, be courteous and respectful of others who are still working and may not wish to be interrupted or to take their break at the same time.

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### IV. Leave Requests

Any leave request, other than when necessitated by a sudden illness or other emergent situation, is pre-approved by your supervisor and the appropriate form must be used. Please be familiar with the guidelines for leave as outlined in the appropriate bargaining unit agreement. Advance notice is required for time off for vacations and, whenever possible, for scheduled sick leave.

Vacation leave must be pre-approved. Approval is not official until both parties sign the form. You are encourage not to purchase airline tickets, etc. without first receiving a signed leave slip to avoid any inconvenience if the leave requested cannot be approved. Once approved, note the leave dates on your personal electronic calendar and on leave calendars if one is in use by your office or section.

Leave is granted within the constraints imposed by workload demands and as long as the employee has accrued the benefit. Vacations using paid leave are encouraged to help maintain a motivated workplace. Requests for leave without pay (LWOP) are generally not approved, but will be considered on a case-by-case basis and require the approval of the supervisor delegated responsibility to approve LWOP requests. Since DPA is a leanly staffed organization with daily production responsibilities, leave must be staggered within work groups. Supervisors are required to manage leave in a manner that enables their unit to carry out its responsibilities.

Unscheduled leave puts a hardship on the work group, and is discouraged except for illness. When requesting unscheduled leave, you are expected to talk to your supervisor to request the leave before the start of your work day. Individual supervisors may have further requirements for requesting unscheduled leave and this discussion should take place at the time of hire.

### V. Microsoft Outlook Calendar

Keep your electronic calendar updated with scheduled meetings, appointments, training, business travel, etc. At a minimum, your calendar should be shared with your supervisor. You also may use the Outlook calendar for personal appointments or personal business. Please note that electronic calendars are public records and are subject to the various public records laws and regulations.

### VI. Communications

#### a. Person to Person

- Be open and honest. Adult-to-adult conversations are essential to earning the trust of our customers, co-workers, supervisors/managers and partners.
- Greet people with a smile and a friendly word, it is an act of respect. Smile before you pick up the phone or hit send on an email. Think about the recipient; how will your communication be received?
- Do not engage in idle gossip or rumor mongering. If you have questions or concerns, bring them to your supervisor.

#### b. Email Etiquette

- Use appropriate, business-like language to avoid confusion on the part of the receiver and to ensure the message is understood.
- Use a pertinent subject title for each message; for example, include FYI or Action in the subject line so the receiver has a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
- Do not email anything containing libelous, discriminatory, political, offensive or racist comments.
- Do not forward any email you receive that contains inflammatory or offensive language. Remember, you cannot control the email you receive, but you do control what you send.
- Capitalizing entire words is considered shouting, so for emphasis underline important passages or use bold or colored text.
- Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation as each email must be clear and unambiguous.
- Delete unwanted notes and messages since they take up disk space.

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- Follow procedures for the proper retention of email records. See: <http://www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/ADMIN/info/msEA/THM-ElectronicMailRetentionandDisposition.ppt>

### **c. Blackberry, Cell phone, Technology use**

Refrain from checking devices (such as iPhone, Blackberry, laptop, iPad, PC, etc) for messages when meeting with an individual, attending a group meeting, or while in training. In most meeting situations, cell phones should be off. Even if your ring tone is muted or the phone is set to vibrate, it is generally, impolite and disruptive to answer calls while meeting with others. If you are expecting an important call, inform those you are meeting with that you may be interrupted or reschedule for a time when you can focus your attention on their issue.

During work hours, turn your phone on vibrate so it doesn't disrupt the office. Head phones/ear buds can be worn at your desk as long as you can hear your surroundings (people approaching you, your phone ringing, etc.) and the volume isn't loud enough to disrupt others from their work. Do not walk around the office with headphones/ear buds.

Set your email to "out of office" when participating in a planned meeting which is a day or more in duration so individuals know who to contact in your absence if urgent and let them know you will be in touch with them as soon as you can.

## **VII. Use of State Resources**

Per Division and Department of Administration (DOA) policy, use of all State resources is for official purposes only including, but not limited to, office building, internet use, mobile devices, e-mail, copy machine, and the fax machine. Computer games are not allowed on the hard drive or disks.

The State understands incidental use of state assets for non-state related business will occur. However, it is State policy that to keep personal phone calls, emails, texting, and internet use to a minimum regardless of the technological device you are using. Receiving or sending personal messages during work hours should only occur on occasion. If you are waiting on an important message, it is best to discuss the situation in advance with your direct supervisor.

It is DPA's policy to return phone calls and emails within one working day unless on leave or away from the office for business purposes, even if it is to simply request more time to complete the research necessary to provide an adequate response.

**The signature of the employee on this form constitutes acknowledgement that they have received and read these expectations.**

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Signature of Employee

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Printed Name of Employee

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Date