



Northeast District Department of Health

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Northeast District Department of Health Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Time: 3:00 PM Eastern

NDDH Conference Room

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:09 p.m.
2. Attendees:
Ann Hinchman (Chair), Gail Dickinson, Don Gladding, Susan Starkey (Director of Health), and Linda Buisson (Administrative Assistant)

Excused: David Griffiths, Lana Salisbury
3. Citizen Participation - None.
4. Minutes of May 17, 2023:
D. Gladding motioned to accept minutes. G. Dickinson seconded. A. Hinchman, G. Dickinson, D. Gladding in favor. Motion carried (3-0-0).
5. Review DoH Evaluation Form Process and Timeline
The evaluation revisions were reviewed. A. Hinchman noted the need to get the evaluations out and back so there is time to collect all the responses and have them ready to present at the January Board meeting. This is especially important as Board representatives are being asked to meet with town leaders to complete the evaluation form.

It was suggested to send the evaluation to all Board members on November 10th, the day following the Board meeting with directions to the Board regarding how to complete the evaluation and request that it be done with each representative's town leader. With a December 1st due date on the evaluations, the responses may be reviewed at the December 6th Personnel Committee and then shared with the Board in January.

The Committee was reminded that the Director's evaluation review period is supposed to run from December 1st through November 30th the following year, however they still would like to send the evaluation to all Board members on November 10, 2023.
6. Employee Manual Suggested Changes

L. Buisson shared a change made to the Employee Manual following the recent change to the NDDH retirement plan based on the new Union contract.

Other suggested changes to the Employee Manual include the following:

- **Page 12/13 - VACATION**

S. Starkey explained that the change will not impact services. Vacation can be approved on short notice and eliminating the two week notice requirement would improve workplace satisfaction. As employees are always extremely busy, they may find a dip in their workload coming up in three days and request time off. The two weeks approval prohibits them from being able to request the time off with such short notice.

SUGGESTED

NDDH will endeavor to allow employees to use their vacation as desired. Supervisors are responsible to maintain adequate staffing levels and may limit the approval of vacation requests to meet operational needs. All vacation requests must be approved by the employee's supervisor ~~at least two weeks in advance.~~ **Advance notice is preferable and may increase the likelihood of time being approved.** If any conflicts arise in vacation requests, preference will be given to the employee with the longest length of continuous service.

- **Page 11 – TUITION**

S. Starkey suggested the changes below as a means of giving more employees an opportunity to take advantage of tuition reimbursement.

SUGGESTED

Full-time employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement after successful completion of the introductory period. Reimbursement is contingent upon funding availability and prior approval of the Director and is reserved for courses related to public health and enhancing the employee's work. ~~Up to 75% of "direct" tuition costs~~ **Employees may be reimbursed up to \$750 per course and \$1,500 per year** ~~(based on in-state per credit tuition costs of the Connecticut State University System)~~ for tuition, lab fees, books, and materials ~~up to a maximum per fiscal year per employee as set annually by the Board of Directors is reimbursable.~~ A grade of "B" or above, "Pass" or "Completed" is required. Receipts and a copy of all grades must be submitted within 90 days of course completion.

- **Page 22 – CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

S. Starkey suggested the change below as NDDH does not have a Human Resource Manager. Currently, L. Buisson is serving in the role of Human Resource Representative. Specifically, she is the liaison that people can go to assist reconcile and be an intermediary between an employee and supervisor.

A. Hinchman suggested that supervisors should have conflict resolution training in the hopes that they can work things out with employees and there is no need to go further than step 2.

S. Starkey stated that all employees have had some training on the subject, viewing online trainings provided by our payroll company.

NDDH supervisors are gaining skills to have difficult conversations which may stop the process at Step 2. A. Hinchman noted that people are unaware of how much power they wield,

and that one wrong comment can upset the entire agency, not realizing they were passing information on to the staff. There should be a separation between supervisor and employee (this is especially true if an employee who was a peer is advanced into a supervisory position). An internal promotion can be difficult.

A.Hinchman suggested that the definition of conflict resolution should be included before the steps to be followed.

SUGGESTED

Conflict Resolution is a process of addressing and resolving dispute or disagreements between individuals or groups. It involves understanding, communication, and negotiation to find solutions. The goal is to reach an outcome that minimizes hostility, promotes harmony, and is acceptable to all parties involved.

If an employee has a conflict with another employee:

Step 1: Employees should try to work it out between themselves.

Step 2: If they are unable to resolve the issue, they need to involve their supervisor.

Step 3: If the issue is not resolved with the supervisor involvement, employees need to bring the issue to the Human Resource Manager **or Human Resource Representative.**

Steps 4 through 8 remain unchanged.

- **Page 15 – PARENTAL LEAVE**

NO CURRENT POLICY

SUGGESTED – PARENTAL LEAVE

NDDH employees are eligible for up to three months (17 weeks) of maternity leave using paid or unpaid leave if earned time is unavailable. Earned time benefits will accrue while on paid leave and for up to 30 days of unpaid leave time. Life insurance and disability insurance will be covered for the duration of the leave. Health, dental, and vision insurance will be covered for the duration if employee continues to pay the employee portion of coverage. This can be pre-arranged through the Finance Manager.

G. Dickinson had several suggestions: 1) the leave should be called parental leave not maternity leave; 2) suggested a parental leave definition be added as the first sentence; 3) there should be the inclusion for an adopted child being added to a family.

A. Hinchman asked if we were required by state law to offer FMLA or the new 2022 law. As a government / municipal-type company, the law does not apply to NDDH. S. Starkey noted that our suggestion for parental leave is not in conflict with the state law and there is currently nothing in our employee manual allowing people parental leave. We would like to add this.

There was an inquiry regarding whether an employee could work intermittently during paternal leave, i.e., working Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. If so, how would that work and how

should it be written in the manual? If the employee did that, it was suggested they would then be a part-time employee and their benefits would be pro-rated based on the hours worked.

PARENTAL LEAVE SUGGESTED REVISIONS TO NEW POLICY

Parental leave is defined as time off for the arrival of an adopted or birthed child. NDDH employees are eligible for up to three months (17 weeks) of parental leave using paid or unpaid leave if earned time is unavailable. Earned time benefits will accrue while on paid leave and for up to 30 days of unpaid leave time. Life insurance and disability insurance will be covered for the duration of the leave. Health, dental, and vision insurance will be covered for the duration if employee continues to pay the employee portion of coverage. This can be pre-arranged through the Finance Manager.

The Committee agreed to take all the above changes to the full Board for approval. A. Hinchman still had concerns regarding leaves of absence and thought it should be its own separate section. She questioned the difference between a medical leave and a family leave. It is the same thing.

7. Next Meeting – December 6, 2023.

8. Adjournment*

G. Dickinson motioned to adjourn. D. Gladding seconded. A. Hinchman, G. Dickinson, and D. Gladding, in favor. Motion carried (3-0-0). Meeting adjourned at 4:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Violette Buisson