

**IRWIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COURTHOUSE
COMMISSIONERS MEETING MARCH 02, 2026 6:00 P.M.
AGENDA**

PUBLIC HEARING

CONSIDER THE APPLICATION FOR THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION TO ZONING FOR DATA CENTER

ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED:

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. INVOCATION**
- 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 4. AGENDA APPROVAL**
- 5. APPROVE FEBRUARY 02, 2026 COMMISSIONER MEETING MINUTES**
- 6. APPROVE FEBRUARY 10, 2026 CALLED MEETING MINUTES**
- 7. APPROVE FEBRUARY 23, CALLED MEETING MINUTES**
- 8. APPROVE FEBRUARY 23, 2026 WORKSHOP MINUTES**
- 9. APPROVE FEBRUARY 25, 2026 CALLED MEETING MINUTES**
- 10. STATEMENTS AND REMARKS FROM CITIZENS**
- 11. STATEMENTS AND REMARKS FROM COMMISSIONERS**

- 12. OLD BUSINESS**

- 13. NEW BUSINESS**
 - a. APPROVE APPLICATION FOR A SPECIAL EXCEPTION TO ZONING FOR DATA CENTER
 - b. APPOINT ALLEN SMITH TO DFCS BOARD
 - c. APPROVE GRAND JURY PRESENTMENTS
 - d. APPROVE AN INCREASE TO TAN OF \$750,000.00
 - e. DISCUSS FINANCIAL POLICY
 - f. APPROVE NEW PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL

- 14. EXECUTIVE SESSION**
- 15. ADJOURN**

“Persons with special needs relation to handicapped accessibility or foreign language should contact County Clerk Patricia Battle at 229-468-9441 before 5:00 p.m. before the day of the meeting. This person is located at the Irwin County Commission, 225 East 4th Street, Ocilla, GA 31774, and is available between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, or you may call 229-468-9441. Persons with hearing disabilities may consider using the Georgia Relay Service, at (TDD) 1-800-255-0056 or (Voice) 1-800-255-0135.”



January 23, 2026

Irwin County Commissioners
225 East 4th Street
Ocilla, Georgia 31774

Dear Irwin County Commissioners.

This is to advise you that the term of Allan Smith, who is the board chairman of the Irwin County Board of Family and Children Services, has expired on June 30, 2025. The law requires the County Commission to appoint a successor within ninety (90) days after the vacancy occurs.

Mr. Smith has been an outstanding board member for this agency for years. The person appointed will serve a term extending through June 30, 2030. Please send me notification of the appointment by via-email and/or address listed below.

I urge you to consider representation from a cross-section address of the local community should you choose not to re-appoint Ms. Bullard. This can serve to strengthen the impact of public assistance and social services to residents of your county.

I am very grateful for the support that you and the county commissioners have given to Irwin County DFCS. If I can be of assistance, please feel free to contact me. rachel.fuller@dhs.ga.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Fuller".

Rachel Fuller
Ben Hill County DFCS Director

Cc: Meredith Jones, Regional Director

Mr. Allan Smith wants to be reappointed as our Board Chairman for Irwin County Department and Family Children Services.

**PRESENTMENTS OF THE GRAND JURY
FEBRUARY 2026 TERM, FEBRUARY 2026 SESSION
IRWIN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT**

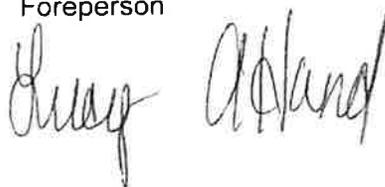
We, the Grand Jury, serving at the February Session of the February 2026 Term make the following presentments:

1. We wish to thank the Honorable Bill Reinhardt, Judge, for his able instructions to this body, District Attorney Patrick Warren, Assistant District Attorney Sandra Guest and the rest of the District Attorney's staff, Sheriff Cody Youghn and the Irwin County Sheriff's Office, Chief Bill Barrs and the Ocilla Police Department, the South Central Drug Task Force and our Bailiff, M'Lynda Elrod.
2. The Grand Jury considered evidence presented concerning 5 cases, 14 offenses, and returned: ~~4~~ True Bills, 0 No Bills, and 0 Tabled.
3. The Grand Jury voted to appoint Dennis William Gay as a Member of the Board of Equalization for the 3-year term beginning January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2028 and Mr. ben Fowler as a third alternate member for a term beginning January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2028.
4. The Grand Jury authorized to securely destroy records, copies, and other items legally held in the care of the designated Clerk's offices once the timeframes have fully expired for the March and May 2024 elections and the Electors' Lists for the November 2020 and January 2021 elections.
5. We respectfully request that the court order the within recommendations and presentments of the Grand Jury to be spread upon the minutes of the Irwin Superior Court and be published in The Ocilla Star and that the Clerk of Court send a copy of these presentments to the Irwin County Commission.

This 9th day of February, 2026.

Ariel Lea Pettis Roberts,
Clerk

Lucy A Hand,
Foreperson



FILED IN OPEN COURT
This 9 day of February 2026
12:10
D. Ann + Row
MB 88 Pg 151-153

Irwin County Personnel Policy Manual

Adopted by the Irwin County Board of Commissioners

Effective DATE

WHEREAS, the Irwin County Board of Commissioners is vested with authority under the Constitution and laws of the State of Georgia to establish personnel policies governing county employment; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners finds it necessary and proper to adopt uniform personnel policies to ensure fair, consistent, and lawful administration of county employment;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that all prior personnel manuals, implied policies, informal practices, verbal policies, or written agreements, whether known or unknown, are hereby rescinded and declared null and void; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Irwin County Board of Commissioners does hereby adopt and place into effect this **Irwin County Personnel Policy Manual** effective **DATE**, which shall remain in effect until amended or rescinded by official action of the Board of Commissioners.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE - O.C.G.A. § 45-10-1

There is established for and within the state and for in all governments therein a code of ethics for government service which shall read as follows:

CODE OF ETHICS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Any person in government service should:

- Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to the country above loyalty to persons, party, or government departments.
- Uphold the Constitution, laws, and legal regulations of the United States and the State of Georgia and of all governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.
- Give a full day's labor for a full day's pay and give to the performance of his duties his earnest effort and best thought.
- Seek to find and employ more efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished.
- Never discriminate unfairly by the dispensing of special favors or privileges to anyone, whether for remuneration or not and never accept, for himself or his family, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by a reasonable person as influencing the performance of his governmental duties.
- Make no private promises of any kind binding upon the duties of office, since a government employee has no private word which can be binding on public duty.
- Engage in no business with the government, either directly or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of his governmental duties.
- Never use any information coming to him confidentially in the performance of governmental duties as a means for making private profit.
- Expose corruption wherever discovered.
- Uphold these principles, ever conscious that public office is a public trust.

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AUTHORITY & GOVERNANCE

These personnel policies are adopted pursuant to the authority of the **Irwin County Board of Commissioners** under the Constitution of the State of Georgia and applicable provisions of the **Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.)**.

The Board of Commissioners retains full and exclusive authority to:

- Establish, amend, interpret, and rescind personnel policies;
- Determine compensation, benefits, and working conditions;
- Delegate administrative responsibilities as permitted by law.

No officer, employee, or agent of Irwin County has authority to alter these policies except by formal action of the Board of Commissioners.

Board Of Commissioners

The **Irwin County Board of Commissioners** is the final policy-making authority for all personnel matters. All employment policies, compensation plans, and benefit structures exist solely at the discretion of the Board, subject to applicable law.

County Manager

The **County Manager** serves as the chief administrative officer of Irwin County and is responsible for:

- Implementing personnel policies adopted by the Board;
- Supervising day-to-day county operations as directed by the Board;
- Administering personnel actions in accordance with Board policy.

The County Manager **does not possess independent policy-making authority** and acts solely under the direction and authority of the Board of Commissioners.

Department Heads & Elected Officials

Department Heads and Elected Officials are responsible for administering these personnel policies within their respective offices, consistent with Georgia law and Board directives.

Purpose & Scope

These policies establish the primary rules governing employment with Irwin County. They are intended to:

- Promote consistent, equitable, and lawful employment practices;
- Clarify employee rights and responsibilities;
- Ensure compliance with federal and Georgia law.

These policies apply to all Irwin County employees unless a specific classification is expressly exempted by law.

Nothing in this manual creates a contract of employment, either express or implied.

1.0 EMPLOYMENT AT WILL

All employment with Irwin County is at will pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 34-7-1. Nothing in this manual creates a contract or guarantee of continued employment.

This means:

- Either the employee or Irwin County may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without notice, and with or without cause, so long as the reason is not prohibited by law.
- No employee has a guarantee of continued employment.
- No policy, procedure, benefit, or practice contained in this manual alters the at-will nature of employment.
- Irwin County shall also have the right to change any condition, benefit, policy, or privilege of employment at any time, with or without notice.
- Employees of Irwin County shall have the right to leave their employment with the County at any time, with or without notice.

No supervisor, manager, or official has authority to enter into an agreement that modifies at-will employment unless expressly approved in writing by the Board of Commissioners.

2.0 EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

Equal Employment Opportunity

Irwin County is an equal opportunity employer and complies with all applicable federal and Georgia law.

It shall be the policy of Irwin County to be an equal opportunity employer. Race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, and disability shall not be factors in hiring, promotion, demotion, raises, termination, training, discipline, use of employee facilities or programs, or any other benefit, condition, or privilege of employment except where required by law or where a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ) exists.

The County shall make reasonable accommodation for otherwise qualified disabled individuals to afford them the same opportunities for employment and all other benefits and privileges of employment afforded to non-disabled individuals.

Reasonable accommodation shall be determined through consultation with the disabled individual and, where deemed necessary, through consultation with outside resources.

As an employee, you will be expected to follow this policy in your dealings with clients, visitors, and fellow employees. If you have any problems or concerns regarding the County's equal opportunity policy, please contact your supervisor or the Human Resources or County Manager.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

Irwin County complies with the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** and applicable Georgia law.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to reasonably accommodate qualified individuals with disabilities. It is the policy of Irwin County to comply with all Federal and state laws concerning the employment of persons with disabilities.

It is County policy not to discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in regard to application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training, or other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

Irwin County will reasonably accommodate qualified individuals with temporary or long-term disability so that they can perform the essential functions of a job.

An individual who can be reasonably accommodated for a job, without undue hardship, will be given the same consideration for that position as any other applicant.

All employees are required to comply with safety standards. Applicants who pose a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals in the workplace, which threat cannot be eliminated by reasonable accommodation, will not be hired. Current employees who pose a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals in the workplace will be placed on appropriate leave until an organizational decision has been made in regard to the employee's immediate employment situation.

Procedure for reasonable accommodation requests:

- Employee advises supervisor of the need for accommodation. Employee completes a Request for Accommodation form and gives it to his or her supervisor.
- The accommodation request will be discussed with the employee and the employee's manager(s).
- The employee may be required to provide documentation supporting a disability, including medical certification.

- If a reasonable appropriate accommodation is readily available, the request will be approved, and the accommodation implemented.
- If an accommodation is not readily ascertainable, the matter will be pursued further with assistance from appropriate external resources.

Definitions

As used in this policy, the following terms have the indicated meaning and will be adhered to in relation to the ADA policy.

- Disability refers to a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual. An individual who has such an impairment, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment is a “disabled individual”.
- Direct threat to safety means a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable accommodations.
- Qualified individual with a disability means an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position that the individual holds or has applied for.
- Reasonable accommodation means making existing facilities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, job restructuring, part-time modified work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, adjustment or modification of examinations, adjustment or modification of training materials, adjustment or modification of policies, and similar activities.
- Undue hardship means an action requiring significant difficulty or expense by the employer. The factors to be considered in determining an undue hardship include but are not limited to: (1) the nature and cost of the accommodations; (2) the overall financial resources of the facility at which the reasonable accommodation is to be made; (3) the number of persons employed at the facility; (4) the effect on expenses and resources or other impact upon that facility; (5) the overall financial resources of the County; (6) the overall number of employees and facilities; (7) the operations of the particular facility as well as the entire County; and (9) the relationship of the particular facility to the County.
- Essential job functions refers to those activities of a job that are the core to performing said job for which the job exists that cannot be modified.

Religious Accommodation

We are dedicated to treating the religious diversity of all our employees equally and with respect. Employees may request an accommodation when their religious belief causes a

deviation from the County's dress code, grooming practices, schedule, basic job duties, or other aspects of employment. The County will consider the request but reserves the right to offer its own accommodation to the extent permitted by law. Some, but not all, of the factors that the County will consider are cost, safety, the effect that an accommodation will have on current established policies and the burden on operations, including other employees, when determining a reasonable accommodation. At no time will the County question the validity of a person's deeply held religious belief.

All requests should be submitted in writing to the Human Resources Manager.

Anti-Discrimination/Anti-Harrassment

It is the policy of the County that all employees shall have the opportunity to work in an atmosphere and environment free from any form of discrimination, harassment or retaliation based on characteristics or status protected by federal, state, or local laws. The County does not authorize, practice, condone, or tolerate any form of discrimination and/or harassment of or by any employee, whether supervisory or non-supervisory, or by any guest, visitor, customer, or vendor.

Harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of a protected characteristic or status. While it is not possible to list all the circumstances that may constitute forms of workplace harassment, the following are some examples of conduct that may constitute workplace harassment: (a) the use of disparaging or abusive words or phrases, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, intimidating or hostile acts that relate to the above protected categories; (b) written or graphic material that insults, stereotypes or shows aversion or hostility towards an individual or group because of one of the above protected categories and that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, email, voicemail, or elsewhere on the County's premises, or circulated in the workplace; and (c) a display of symbols, slogans, or items that are associated with hate or intolerance towards any select group.

Any employee who feels that he or she has suffered any form of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation should immediately report the alleged conduct to his or her supervisor or manager so that an investigation of the complaint can be undertaken. Alternatively, the employee may report the alleged conduct to the human resources manager or County Manager. Any employee who wishes to discuss the matter with a manager of the same sex will have someone provided to them when possible.

While verbal reports are anticipated, an employee reporting these types of behavior will be asked to make a written report providing as much detail as possible concerning who has engaged in the behavior, when, where, and exactly what was done or said.

Any employee who observes conduct by another employee that he or she believes to be harassing, retaliatory, or discriminatory must report such conduct as outlined above. All

complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible and will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.

Retaliation or discrimination against an employee for reporting or complaining about harassment is prohibited and will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

We trust that all employees will continue to act in a responsible and professional manner to establish a pleasant working environment free of discrimination and harassment.

Whistle Blowing

The County will not retaliate against an employee who makes a complaint or otherwise discloses information concerning fraud, waste, or abuse in any state program unless the employee knew that the complaint or information was false or acted with willful disregard for the truth or falsity of the complaint or information.

Suggestion And Complaint Procedure & Open-Door Policy

The County has always believed in promoting an atmosphere of open communication and cooperation among all of our personnel.

Consequently, the County is always looking for new and improved ways to keep communication channels open on a two-way basis between our employees and the managers of our organization. We want employees to be free to tell us about personal recommendations for improvements as well as any problems experienced on the job. We believe resolutions are more efficiently reached by following the County's chain of command. When possible, we prefer employees to discuss recommendations or issues with their immediate supervisor as a first step when possible. If the nature of the issue or recommendation makes this impractical, employees are welcome to speak with the human resources manager or the County manager.

Therefore, if any employee experiences problems during his/her employment, including a disagreement with a fellow employee or supervisor; if an employee feels he/she has been treated unfairly; or if an employee has a problem that has not resolved to his/her satisfaction, the County encourages the employee to discuss it with the immediate supervisor. The supervisor will investigate the situation and get back with the employee as quickly as possible. Should this not resolve an employee's problem, or the immediate supervisor is a subject of complaint, the employee is encouraged to talk with the human resources manager or the County Manager.

By utilizing this suggestion and complaint procedure, we can avoid unresolved problems that may affect our ability to serve others. There will never be any retaliation against an employee for using this channel of communication.

Statement On Unions

We appreciate the support of our employees and our customers and hereby reaffirm our commitment to treat employees with respect and dignity, as well as to provide an open line of communication to all levels of management. We believe any employee concerns can be best addressed through frank discussion in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation, without the involvement of outsiders. We value employees as individuals, and we want to be responsive to their concerns and issues.

We believe that unions do not serve any useful purpose, as their desire is to obtain union dues, fees, fines, and assessments from employees through creating a perception that employees need representation. Unions typically do this by raising issues in the workplace which they purport to solve. Unions have no such power. We believe problems are best solved by everyone working together. Under the law, the union has no power to make the County do anything it does not feel is in its best interests. Rest assured, the County is committed to providing its employees with job security and a bright future with the County. Unions do not offer us any help in achieving this goal.

If anyone ever asks you to sign a union card or participate in any union activity, we want you to know that you have the legal right to refuse such attempts and to discuss any questions you may have with someone in management to be sure that you have all the facts on the subject.

3.0 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS & LEAVE

Benefits and leave policies are established by the Board of Commissioners and do not vest.

Employee Status

Employees of Irwin County are divided into the following categories for the purpose of compensation and benefits:

- **FULL-TIME:** A regular full-time employee shall be any employee in a position which has a normal work schedule of at least 40 hours per week.
- **PART-TIME:** A regular part-time employee shall be any employee in a position which has a normal work schedule of less than 40 hours per week. He/she is entitled to vacation and sick leave on a proportional basis and is eligible for retirement. He or she is not eligible for health insurance benefits.
- **TEMPORARY:** A temporary employee shall be a non-regular employee who is hired into a position which is expected to last for some specific duration or until a specific project is completed. A temporary employee may be hired to fill a position until a non-temporary employee is hired; an employee who customarily

and consistently leaves employment after a period of time, such as students; an employee who is on a rotating “call list”; or an employee who is on an internship. Temporary employees are not entitled to the county’s fringe benefits other than worker’s compensation and, in some instances, unemployment insurance. Temporary employees may be either full time or part time.

- **REGULAR:** A regular employee shall be any employee hired into a position which is not considered to be temporary. Regular employees may be either full-time or part-time.
- **EMPLOYMENT AT WILL:** All employees are considered to be “at will” employees as defined in the POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT-AT-WILL and employee status shall not be considered a contract of employment.

Job (Class) Descriptions

Job descriptions are intended to describe general duties and responsibilities.

They do not create contractual rights and may be modified at any time.

Paid Time Off (PTO)

Paid Time Off (PTO) is an all-purpose time-off policy for eligible employees to use for vacation, illness or injury, and personal business. It combines traditional vacation and sick leave plans into one flexible, paid time-off policy. This policy applies to regular full-time employees.

The County believes that time away from work is essential to personal well-being and productivity. Therefore, PTO cannot be accrued beyond one year and we strongly encourage each employee to completely utilize his or her annual PTO. PTO earning dates are based upon your anniversary date according to the following schedule:

- **After sixty days of full-time employment: 6 days per year**
- **After two years of full-time employment: 12 days per year**
- **After eleven years of full-time employment: 15 days per year**
- **After sixteen years of full-time employment: 18 days per year**

Employees who have an unexpected need to be absent from work should notify their direct supervisor at least two hours before the scheduled start of their workday, if possible. The direct supervisor must also be contacted on each additional day of unexpected absence. Unexpected absences, regardless if paid pursuant to the PTO policy, are subject to the attendance policy. Upon return to work, the employee should complete the appropriate leave request forms provided by the County.

To schedule planned PTO, employees should request advance approval, using provided leave request forms, from their supervisors at least two weeks in advance. Requests will be reviewed based on several factors, including business needs and staffing requirements.

PTO is paid at the employee's base pay rate at the time of absence for the number of hours absent. It does not include overtime or any special forms of compensation such as incentives, commissions, bonuses, or shift differentials.

An employee terminated for cause or who does not work out his/her notices will not be paid any accrued vacation.

Holidays

Eligibility

All regular full-time and regular part-time employees are eligible for paid holidays as established annually by the Board of Commissioners.

Temporary employees are not eligible.

Holiday Schedule

The official holiday schedule is adopted annually by Board resolution.

The County recognizes the following holidays and will post the holiday schedule each year for your reference. You will be paid for a regular 8-hour day as holiday pay.

- Christmas Day
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving

Normally the office will be closed during the recognized holidays. However, it may be necessary for an employee to work. If that is the case, you will be paid for any hours worked and a make-up holiday day will be provided as soon as working conditions allow. Holidays that fall on a weekend may be observed either the Friday before or the Monday after the actual date of the holiday. An annual calendar will be provided showing the exact holidays and their dates for observation.

Holiday Work

Employees required to work on a designated holiday may receive compensatory time or alternate leave as authorized by department management.

Jury Duty Leave

Employees summoned for jury duty shall receive leave with pay for time spent in jury service during their normal work schedule.

Any compensation received from jury service may be retained by the employee.

The County recognizes that jury duty is the obligation of all citizens and encourages all employees to fulfill this obligation. The County will provide time off work for any employee who is required to serve on jury duty and pay will be determined in accordance with state law. However, this Section does not apply to any employee who is required to attend a judicial proceeding due to being charged with a crime.

Military Leave

(USERRA; O.C.G.A. Title 38)

Irwin County complies with the **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)** and applicable Georgia law.

Eligible employees are entitled to:

- Unpaid military leave
- Reemployment rights
- Continuation of benefits as required by law

Paid military leave, if offered, is subject to Board policy and does not exceed statutory limits. Employees entering the uniformed services are eligible for Military Leave and will be provided all benefits to which such employees are entitled under federal and state law. If you have any questions about military leave, please contact the Human Resources Department.

Funeral & Administrative Leave

Employees may be granted funeral leave for the death of an immediate family member.

Permanent full-time employees who have been employed for **6 months** are allowed three (3) days leave with pay due to a death in the immediate family. Immediate family is defined as husband, wife, mother, father, children including (adopted or foster), mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren. Paid funeral leave will be granted (not to exceed one (1) day) for attending the funeral of a near relative. Near

relatives are defined as nieces, nephews, uncles, aunts. Arrangements for bereavement leave should be made through management.

Family & Medical Leave (FMLA)

Irwin County complies with the **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**.

Eligible employees may take unpaid, job-protected leave for qualifying reasons.

We recognize that there are times when an employee may need to be absent from work due to qualifying events under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Accordingly, we will provide Eligible Employees up to a combined total of twelve (12) weeks of unpaid FMLA leave per Leave Year for the following reasons:

- **Parental Leave:** For the birth of a child or placement of an adopted or foster child.
- **Personal Medical Leave:** When an employee is unable to work due to his/her own Serious Health Condition.
- **Family Care Leave:** To care for a spouse, child, or parent with a Serious Health Condition.
- **Military Exigency Leave:** When an employee's spouse, parent, son, or daughter (of any age) experiences a Qualifying Exigency resulting from military service (applies to active service members deployed to a foreign country, National Guard and Reservists); and,
- **Military Care Leave:** To care for an employee's spouse, parent, son, daughter (of any age) or next of kin who requires care due to an Injury or Illness incurred while on active duty or was exacerbated while on active duty. NOTE: A leave of up to 26 weeks of leave per twelve-month period may be taken to care for the injured/ill service member.

Key Policy Definitions

"Eligible Employees" under this policy are those who have been employed by our County for at least twelve months (need not be consecutive months and under certain circumstances hours missed from work due to military call-up will also be counted) and have performed at least 1,250 hours of service in the twelve-month period immediately preceding the date leave is to begin. However, employees should contact Human Resources to discuss other types of leave that might be available for the reasons listed in this policy.

"Leave Year" for the purposes of this policy shall be a rolling 12-month period measured backward from the date an employee uses any FMLA leave.

"Spouse" means a husband or wife as recognized under state law for the purposes of marriage in the State where the employee resides.

“Son or Daughter” for the purposes of Parental or Family Leave is defined as a biological, adopted, foster child, stepchild, legal ward or a child for whom the employee stood in loco parentis to, who is (1) under eighteen years of age or, (2) eighteen years of age or older and unable to care for him/herself because of physical or mental disability. A “Son or Daughter” for the purposes of Military Exigency or Military Care leave can be of any age.

“Parent” means a biological, adoptive, step or foster parent or any other individual who stood in loco parentis to the employee when the employee was a son or daughter.

“Next of Kin” for the purposes of Military Care leave is a blood relative other than a spouse, parent, or child in the following order: brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, and first cousins. If a military service member designates in writing another blood relative as his/her caregiver, that individual shall be the only next of kin. In appropriate circumstances, employees may be required to provide documentation of next of kin status.

“Serious Health Condition” is an illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition that involves either inpatient care or continuing treatment by a Health Care Provider. Ordinarily, unless complications arise, cosmetic treatments and minor conditions such as the cold, flu, earaches, upset stomach, minor ulcers, headaches (other than migraines), routine dental problems are examples of conditions that are not serious health conditions under this policy. If you have any questions about the types of conditions which may qualify, contact Human Resources.

“Health Care Provider” is a medical doctor or doctor of osteopathy, physician’s assistant, podiatrists, dentists, clinical psychologist, optometrists, nurse practitioner, nurse-midwife, clinical social worker, or Christian Science practitioner licensed by the First Church of Christ. Under limited circumstances, a chiropractor or other provider recognized by our group health plan for the purposes of certifying a claim for benefits may also be considered an HCP.

“Qualifying Exigencies” for Military Exigency leave include:

- Short-notice call-ups/deployments of seven days or less (NOTE: leave for this exigency is available for up to seven days beginning the date of call-up notice).
- Attending official ceremonies, programs, or military events.
- Special childcare needs created by a military call-up including making alternative child-care arrangements, handling urgent and non-routine childcare situations, arranging for school transfers, or attending school or daycare meetings.
- Making financial and legal arrangements.

- Attending counseling sessions for the military service member, the employee, or the military service member's son or daughter who is under 18 years of age or 18 or older but is incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability
- Rest and Recuperation (NOTE: fifteen (15) days of leave is available for this exigency per R&R event).
- Post-deployment activities such as arrival ceremonies, reintegration briefings and other official ceremonies sponsored by the military (Note: leave for these events is available during a period of 90-days following the termination of active-duty status). This type of leave may also be taken to address circumstances arising from the death of a covered military member while on active duty.
- Parental care when the military family member is needed to care for a parent who is incapable of self-care (e.g., arranging for alternative care or transfer to a care facility); and,
- Other exigencies that arise that are agreed to by both the County and employee.

“Serious Injury/Illness” incurred by a service member in the line of active duty or that is exacerbated by active duty is any injury or illness that renders the service member unfit to perform the duties of his/her office, grade, rank or rating.

Notice And Leave Request Process

Foreseeable Need for Leave: If the need for leave is foreseeable because of an expected birth/adoption or planned medical treatment, employees must give at least a thirty (30) day notice. If a 30-day notice is not practicable, notice must be given as soon as possible. Employees are expected to complete and return a leave request form prior to the beginning of leave. Failure to provide appropriate notice and/or complete and return the necessary paperwork will result in the delay or denial of leave.

Unforeseeable Need for Leave: If the need for leave is unforeseeable, notice must be provided as soon as practicable and possible under the facts of the particular case. Normal call-in procedures apply to all absences from work including those for which leave under this policy may be requested. Employees are expected to complete and return the necessary leave request form as soon as possible to obtain the leave. Failure to provide appropriate notice and/or complete and return the necessary paperwork on a timely basis will result in the delay or denial of leave.

Leave Request Process: To request leave under this policy, employees must obtain and complete a leave request form from their supervisor or Human Resources and return the completed form to Human Resources. If the need for leave is unforeseeable and employees will be absent more than 3 days, employees should contact Human Resources by telephone and request that a leave form be provided to the employee. If the need for leave will be fewer than 3 days, employees must complete and return the leave request form upon returning to work.

Call-in Procedures: In all instances where an employee will be absent, the call-in procedures and standards established for giving notice of absence from work must be followed.

Leave Increments

Parental Leave: Leave for the birth or placement of a child must be taken in a single block and cannot be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis. Parental Leave must be completed within twelve (12) months of the birth or placement of the child; however, employees may use Parental Leave before the placement of an adopted or foster child to consult with attorneys, appear in court, attend counseling sessions, etc.

Family Care, Personal Medical Leave, Military Exigency and Military Care Leave: Leave taken for these reasons may be taken in a block or blocks of time. In addition, if a Health Care Provider deems it necessary or if the nature of a Qualifying Exigency requires, leave for these reasons can be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis.

Paid Leave Utilization During Fmla Leave

Employees taking Parental, Family Care, Military Exigency and/or Military Care leave must utilize available vacation/PTO, personal days and/or family illness days during this leave. Employees on Personal Medical leave must utilize available sick, personal and vacation/PTO days during this leave. Employees receiving short- or long-term disability or worker's compensation benefits during a Personal Medical Leave will not be required to utilize these benefits. However, employees may elect to utilize accrued benefits to supplement these benefits.

Certification And Fitness For Duty Requirements

Employees requesting Family Care, Personal Medical or Military Care leave must provide certification from a health care provider to qualify for leave. Such certification must be provided within fifteen days of the request for leave unless it is not practicable under the circumstances despite the employee's diligent efforts. Failure to timely provide certification may result in leave being delayed, denied, or revoked. At the County's discretion, employees may also be required to obtain a second and third certification from another health care provider at County expense (except for Military Care leave). Re-certification of the continuance of a serious health condition or an injury/illness of a military service member will also be required at appropriate intervals.

Employees requesting a Military Exigency leave may also be required to provide appropriate active-duty orders and subsequent information concerning Qualifying Exigencies involved.

Employees requesting Personal Medical leave will also be required to provide a fitness for duty certification from their Health Care Provider prior to returning to work.

Scheduling Leave And Temporary Transfers

Where possible, employees should attempt to schedule leave so as not to unduly disrupt operations. Employees requesting leave on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis that is foreseeable based on planned medical treatment may be temporarily transferred to another job with equivalent pay and benefits that better accommodates recurring periods of leave.

Health Insurance

The County will maintain an employee's health insurance coverage during leave on the same basis as if he/she were still working. Employees must continue to make timely payments of their share of the premiums for such coverage. Failure to pay premiums within thirty (30) days of when they are due may result in a lapse of coverage. In this event, the County will notify the employee fifteen (15) days before the date coverage will lapse, that coverage will terminate unless payments are promptly made. Alternatively, at the County's option, the County may pay the employee's share of the premiums during the leave and recover the costs of this insurance upon the employee's return to work. Coverage that lapses due to non-payment of premiums will be reinstated immediately upon return to work without a waiting period. Under most circumstances, if an employee does not return to work at the end of leave, the County may require the employee to reimburse the County for the health insurance premiums paid during the leave.

Return To Work

Employees returning to work at the end of leave will be placed in their original job or an equivalent job with equivalent pay and benefits. Employees will not lose any benefits that accrued before leave was taken. Employees may not, however, be entitled to discretionary raises, promotions, bonus payments or other benefits that become available during the period of leave.

Spouse Aggregation

In the case where an employee and his/her spouse are both employed by the County, the total number of weeks to which both are entitled in the aggregate because of the birth or placement of a child or to care for a parent with a serious health condition will be limited to twelve (12) weeks per Leave Year. Similarly, a husband and wife employed by the County will be limited to a combined total of 26-weeks of leave to care for a military service member. This 26-week leave period will be reduced, however, by the amount of leave taken for other qualifying FMLA events. This type of leave aggregation does not apply to leave needed because of an employee's own serious health condition, to care for a spouse or child with a serious health condition or because of a Qualifying Exigency.

General Provisions

Failure to Return: Employees failing to return to work or failing to make a request for an extension of their leave prior to the expiration of the leave will be deemed to have voluntarily terminated their employment.

Alternative Employment: No employee, while on leave of absence, shall work or be gainfully employed either for himself/herself or others unless express, written permission to perform such outside work has been granted by the County. Any employee on a leave of absence who is found to be working elsewhere without permission will be automatically terminated.

False Reason for Leave: Termination will occur if an employee gives a false reason for a leave.

Workers' Compensation

(O.C.G.A. Title 34)

Irwin County provides Workers' Compensation coverage in accordance with Georgia law.

Employees must promptly report work-related injuries to their supervisor.

Participation in Workers' Compensation benefits does not guarantee continued employment.

4.0 PAYROLL & OVERTIME

Irwin County complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act. Overtime and compensatory time are administered in accordance with Board policy.

Attendance & Timeliness

Employees are expected to report to work as scheduled and to be punctual.

Excessive absenteeism, tardiness, failure to report to work, or failure to properly notify a supervisor may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Nothing in this section alters the at-will nature of employment.

Workplace Flexibility Policy

Whether an employee works onsite, in a hybrid capacity, or fully remote, the primary goal remains the consistent, high-quality delivery of services to the citizens of Irwin County. This policy applies to all full-time and part-time County employees.

Definitions of Work Models

Model	Description	Primary Location
Onsite	Work performed entirely at a County-designated facility (e.g., Courthouse, Road Dept).	County Office
Hybrid	A "Telework" arrangement where an employee works 1–3 days per week from an approved off-site location.	Mixed
Remote	Work performed entirely from an off-site location, with no requirement for regular onsite presence.	Home / Approved Site

Eligibility and Approval

Participation in hybrid or remote work is a discretionary privilege, not an employee right. Eligibility is determined by:

- Role Suitability: The job duties must be capable of being performed effectively outside of the office without impacting public service.
- Performance: Employees must meet or exceed performance standards and have no active disciplinary actions.
- Department Head Approval: All arrangements must be approved in writing by the respective Department Head and/or the Board of Commissioners.

Operational Expectations

- Core Hours: All employees, regardless of location, must be available during Irwin County's standard business hours (e.g., 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM) unless a flexible schedule has been specifically authorized.
- Communication: Remote and hybrid employees must be reachable via phone, email, or messaging platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams) during work hours.
- On-Demand Onsite Presence: Hybrid or remote employees may be required to report to the office for mandatory meetings, training, or during emergency situations (e.g., weather events or elections) as directed by their supervisor.

Equipment and Cybersecurity

- County Property: Laptops or other equipment provided by Irwin County are for official business only. Employees must adhere to the County's IT Security Policy.
- Workspace: Remote/hybrid employees must maintain a safe, professional, and quiet workspace with reliable internet.
- Data Security: Sensitive information (PII) must be handled in accordance with Georgia state law. Public Wi-Fi is strictly prohibited for accessing County servers.

Legal and Liability

- Workers' Compensation: Employees are covered by Georgia workers' compensation during their designated work hours while performing official duties. Injuries must be reported immediately.
- FLSA Compliance: Non-exempt employees must accurately record all hours worked and are prohibited from working overtime without prior written authorization.

Note: This policy is subject to annual review and may be modified or terminated at any time at the discretion of the Irwin County Board of Commissioners.

Work Hours

In General, the minimum work hours for covered employees will be forty (40) hours in a seven (7) day work period. Because of the differences in job requirements in the different departments, the required work week will vary from job to job and department to department.

Overtime is occasionally required, sometimes unexpectedly. All overtime must be approved by your manager or supervisor. It is the responsibility of all employees to notify your manager or supervisor if you believe a project or assignment will necessitate overtime. See the policy below regarding overtime and compensatory time. Employees shall not clock in earlier than 7:55 a.m. each morning.

Lunch

Lunch breaks should be coordinated with your supervisor depending on the work schedule and department needs. Generally, lunch breaks for all non-exempt employees is one hour and is unpaid. This break is deducted from your daily time. Employees are not allowed to take their lunch break at their desk or normal working area.

On occasion, an emergency or other occurrence may keep you from a standard lunch break. Should this happen, you are encouraged to try to find time to take a lunch break later in your shift. If you are not able to take a lunch break for some reason, you must notify the department head or your supervisor as soon as possible so that your working time can be corrected.

Time Reporting

To ensure that all employees are properly paid, all non-exempt employees are required to keep a record of all hours worked. The County believes in a work-life balance and strives to limit the amount of work employee's work outside of normal business hours. However, due to our positions, certain situations may require abnormal work hours. It is the responsibility of the employee to accurately track, record and report all working hours. Hours worked include any work performed at home or off-site, even if worked outside of

normal business hours. This includes time spent working at home on a computer, cell phone, checking emails, or taking/responding to telephone calls. All work from home or work otherwise performed outside of normal business hours needs to be approved by your manager/supervisor. If an emergency situation requires work from home and you cannot contact your manager/supervisor prior to the work, the employee should go ahead and complete the work and accurately track all time spent, notifying the supervisor/manager as quickly as possible thereafter.

It is expected that complete and accurate time sheets will be turned in at least every Monday to your supervisor (Some supervisors may require that your time sheet be turned in earlier). If an employee has working time outside of normal business hours, the time sheet reflecting such time should be turned in no later than the next working day. Failure to do so may result in delay receiving your paycheck. Additionally, employees should carefully review each paycheck to ensure that wages and overtime, if applicable, have been properly paid.

Overtime And Compensatory Time

Irwin County complies with the **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**.

- Non-exempt employees may earn overtime or compensatory time as authorized
- Compensatory time is subject to maximum accrual limits
- Overtime must be approved in advance

When operating requirements or other needs cannot be met during regular working hours, employees may be scheduled to work in excess of their normal schedule. It is the County's intention to minimize such occurrences and ensure that overtime work (work over 40 hours in a week generally) is scheduled and paid in accordance with the policy and applicable State and Federal laws. When possible, advance notification of these mandatory assignments will be provided. *All overtime work must receive the Department Head's prior authorization.*

Overtime assignments will be distributed as equitably as practical to all employees qualified to perform the required work. Failure to work scheduled overtime or overtime worked without prior authorization will result in disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination of employment.

The County is subject to all regulations of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Compensatory time may be given in lieu of overtime pay for hours worked in excess of the normal work period. Compensatory time is accumulated at a rate of 1.5 hours per hour of overtime. The employees and Supervisor should agree on the form of overtime compensation before actual overtime work is performed. Accrued compensatory time

should be used in the same calendar year as it is earned. Employees wanting to utilize accrued compensatory time off must follow the procedures for notice and approval as applied to annual and/or sick leave.

Pay Periods

Employees are paid every two weeks on Friday. Again, employees should carefully review each paycheck to ensure that wages and overtime, if applicable, have been properly paid. If you notice any errors or have questions, notify Human Resources immediately.

The County is committed to complying with all state and federal wage and hour laws. For exempt employees paid on a salary basis, the County will make deductions from your salaries only when the deduction is authorized by you (for example, benefit payments), required by law (for example, taxes, garnishments, and other court-ordered payments), warranted based on your violation of County policy (where permitted by law), or otherwise allowed by law. Subject to certain exceptions allowed by law, salaried employees will receive their full weekly salary for any week in which the employee performs any work, without regard to the number of days or hours worked. Although salaried employees need not be paid for any workweek in which they perform no work, no deductions will be made for absences caused by the County or by the operating requirements of the business.

Any employee, who believes his or her salary has been improperly reduced in violation of this policy, should address the matter promptly with the Human Resources Manager. No employee will suffer any adverse employment consequences as a result of reporting a suspected violation of this policy. If it is confirmed that an improper deduction has been made, the employee will be promptly reimbursed for the amount improperly deducted. If you have any questions about this policy or any other matter relating to your compensation, please contact the Human Resources Manager.

If an employee notices a problem with a payroll check, whether it be hours, rate or deductions, the employee should consult the Human Resource Manager.

Anniversary Date

An employee's anniversary date is defined as the employee's first day of employment. This date is used as a benchmark for qualifying for various benefits. It is also the goal of the County to provide employees with an annual performance review.

Probationary Period

New employees are on probationary status during the first 60 days of employment. During this period, the employee's supervisor will assist the employee in learning his/her responsibilities. The employee will be evaluated on his/her suitability for the position for

which the employee was hired based on the quality of work, cooperation, and attendance. This period also allows employees to decide if they are satisfied with the position and with the County as their employer. Completion of the probationary period does not result in an employment contract for any specific term.

During the probationary period, employees generally will not be eligible for County benefits, including but not limited to, paid holidays and health insurance.

Personnel Records

It is vital that personnel records contain accurate and up-to-date information about every employee. Any change in marital status, number of children or other dependents in the immediate family must be reported to the office manager. This information affects the amount of an employee's payroll deduction for federal withholding tax, insurance premiums and benefits. Any change in address or telephone should also be reported.

An employee's personnel record is kept confidential, to the maximum extent protected by law. Information which is obtained in the course of official duties shall not be released by an employee charged with this responsibility as part of official duties except as required by the Georgia Open Records Act.

Reimbursement Of Expenses

Employees may be reimbursed for authorized expenses incurred in the performance of County business, subject to Board policy.

Rehire of Former Employees and/or Retirees

This policy applies to all employees, retirees, and entities participating in the **Irwin County Retirement Plan**. For the purposes of this policy, the term "Irwin County" or "the County" shall encompass all departments and offices operating under the County's retirement umbrella. This policy ensures compliance with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations regarding the distribution of retirement benefits.

Eligibility for Re-employment

Former employees and retirees are eligible to apply for open positions with Irwin County provided they meet the following three criteria:

1. **Separation Period:** The individual has been fully separated from Irwin County employment for a minimum of **three (3) calendar months**.
2. **No Pre-arranged Agreement:** No prior arrangement, communication, or "handshake agreement" (written or verbal) was made between the County and the individual for re-employment prior to their separation.

3. **Exit Compliance:** The individual strictly adhered to all County exit and offboarding procedures at the time of their original separation.

Bona Fide Separation of Employment

To protect the tax-exempt status of the County's retirement plan, there must be a **bona fide separation of employment**.

Definition: A "bona fide separation" means there is no prior agreement or understanding between Irwin County and the former employee or retiree that they would be rehired after their resignation or retirement.

In accordance with IRS guidelines and state retirement standards, restrictions on re-employment apply regardless of the following:

- Whether the individual is returning to the same or a different department.
- Whether the individual is returning to the same or a different position.
- Changes in employment status (e.g., moving from full-time to part-time).
- Returning as an independent contractor or consultant.

Specific Restrictions for Elected Officials

Newly elected officials who have recently retired from Irwin County are subject to these regulations. If an individual retires with a pre-existing arrangement to return to County service via an elected office, they may be ineligible to draw retirement benefits, as a bona fide separation did not occur.

Legal and Tax Consequences

Any rehired former employee or retiree who fails to establish a bona fide separation may face severe financial penalties, including:

- The requirement to **repay all retirement funds** or monthly payments received during the period of re-employment.
- Liability for additional **IRS excise taxes**.

Note: Abusing these provisions violates Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. Such violations can jeopardize the qualified status of the County's entire retirement plan, resulting in significant tax consequences for the County, its current members, and its retirees.

Status of Rehired Employees

Any former employee or retiree who is rehired in accordance with this policy must establish a **new membership** in the retirement system. For all County administrative purposes, they will be treated as a **new employee**. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Vacation and sick leave accrual rates.
- Longevity pay eligibility.
- Benefit election waiting periods.
- Seniority dates.

5.0 WORK RULES & DISCIPLINE

Employees are expected to follow County rules. Discipline may be imposed up to and including termination.

County Property & Equipment

County property, including vehicles, tools, equipment, technology, and facilities, shall be used for official County business unless otherwise authorized.

Employees are responsible for safeguarding County property and may be held accountable for loss, damage, or misuse.

Off-Duty Access

To provide safety to our visitors and employees as well as to protect the County's confidential and proprietary business information, except during a reasonable period of time before or after a scheduled shift, an employee is not to remain or return to the County property or citizen/customer/client property for any purpose unless the employee is either on duty or scheduled for work or otherwise independently entitled to be there.

Due to safety and insurance considerations, an employee may not have personal visitors while working or while on County property. Non-employees are not allowed in restricted areas unless under the supervision of an employee. Trespassing is prohibited.

If someone drives you to work and picks you up, please have them wait for you outside in the employee parking area.

These rules will be strictly enforced. Violations will be considered grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

Bulletin Boards

Bulletin Boards are used to convey official, authorized information concerning the business of the County only and programs that relate to you. Tampering with bulletin boards, including posting personal messages, is strictly prohibited. Violations will be

considered grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. All employees are urged to check these bulletin boards daily.

Smoking

Smoking is permitted only in designated areas on the premises. "Smoking" refers to the use of tobacco or tobacco-less products and/or substitutes including "vapor" or "e-cigarettes". You may only smoke during your rest and/or meal periods. Employees who smoke are encouraged to observe the usual smoking courtesies in order to avoid inconveniencing other members of the staff. Employees must follow all citizen/customer/client rules regarding smoking while working on those premises.

County Vehicle

Some positions may require the use or operation of a County vehicle for business purposes. The following guidelines apply to all employees driving or accessing a County vehicle:

- County vehicles are for business purposes only. Personal use is prohibited.
- Only authorized, insured, and licensed employees can operate County vehicles.
- Only County employees and guests on official business with the County can occupy a County vehicle.
- All employees must comply with all applicable driving laws and are personally responsible for all infractions or fines that result from their driving.
- Any and all accidents, fines, infractions, or vehicle trouble should be reported immediately to your supervisor or manager.
- Cell phone use is discouraged while driving. Employees should safely pull off the road before utilizing a cell phone. If the use of a cell phone while driving is necessary, a hands-free device is required.

Uniform/ Dress Code

Employee appearance contributes to the Irwin County Board of Commissioners (ICBOC) culture and reputation. Employees are expected to present themselves in a professional manner that results in a favorable impression from colleagues, clients, and customers.

It is the responsibility of every person working for ICBOC to adhere to this policy. **This dress code applies to all employees, interns, work-study personnel, and volunteers.** The ICBOC dress code does not discriminate against an individual on the basis of race, sex, age, genetic information, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. Employees should familiarize themselves with the policy and dress code guidelines.

Employees should consult with their immediate supervisor or the Irwin County Manager for additional guidance.

Section A: Attire Examples

- The Department recognizes three categories of dress in the workplace: **Business Professional, Business Casual, and Casual**. These are the standards of dress required Monday through Friday.
- **Business Professional** attire is the standard of dress expected of most employees, specifically those in an office setting. Appropriate clothing includes:
 - Men: Suits, sports coats, ties, dress shirts, and slacks
 - Women: Suits, dresses, skirts, blouses, and slacks

NOTE: As a reminder, telework spaces are considered an extension of the office setting. Employees should always be prepared for on-camera appearances.
- **Business Casual** attire is a less formal version of business professional but should always be neat, clean, and suitable for the workplace. If lettered or illustrated attire is worn, it should not promote a particular political, moral, religious, personal, or other opinion. Attire, which is obscene, vulgar, offensive or inflammatory, is prohibited. Appropriate clothing includes:
 - Dress pants or capris that stop directly above or below the ankle. Unfaded jeans that are neatly pressed, free of holes, tears, and raveling, may be worn.
 - Casual dresses and skirts; skirt length should be at a length at which you can sit comfortably in public.
 - Casual shirts, dress shirts, sweaters, polo shirts, turtlenecks, suit jackets, or sport jackets.
 - Comfortable shoes such as walking shoes, loafers, boots, flats, and dress heels.

NOTE: Heel heights should be sensible and aid the employee in preventing workplace accidents. Heel height should not prevent the employee from performing the essential functions of their job.
- **Inappropriate Business Casual Attire** includes but are not limited to:
 - Sweatpants, exercise pants, skinny jeans, shorts, leggings, and any spandex or other form-fitting pants.

NOTE: Employees can wear leggings under a sweater dress or a skirt if the length of the sweater dress or skirt is appropriate.

 - Short and/or tight skirts, miniskirts, shorts, skorts, sun dresses, beach dresses, and spaghetti strap dresses.

Tank tops, crop tops, shirts with potentially offensive words, terms, logos, pictures, cartoons, slogans, halter-tops, sweatshirts, and t-shirts unless worn under another blouse, shirt, jacket, or dress.

NOTE: Clothing that reveals your back, chest or stomach is not appropriate.

Athletic shoes, flip-flops, slippers (to include thong slippers), or plastic shoes.

- Supervisors may approve exceptions to permit the wearing of jeans and athletic shoes only in appropriate circumstances (e.g., during an office move or site visit where business casual attire would not be recommended). Otherwise, athletic shoes are not to be worn in the office during the normal workday unless medically necessary. Medical documentation from a health care provider requiring the wearing of athletic shoes in the workplace must be submitted to the Office of Human Resources (OHR) for approval.
- **Casual Attire** is a more relaxed form of business casual, while still remaining professional. Casual days will be allowed periodically as announced by the county manager, division, or office approving authority or designee. Casual days are typically reserved for Fridays. Appropriate clothing includes the following:
 - Dress pants or capris that stop directly above or below the ankle.
 - Jeans, denim skirts, dresses and unmarked T-shirts. This policy does not allow jeans with rips, dirty jeans, unhemmed jeans, jeans that sag or jeans that are too tight.
 - Casual dresses and skirts; skirt length should be at a length at which you can sit comfortably in public.
 - Casual shirts, dress shirts, sweaters, polo shirts, turtlenecks, suit jackets or sport jackets. Employees may participate in Football Fridays where high school team logo shirts are worn if neat and clean.
 - Comfortable shoes such as walking shoes, loafers, boots, flats, and dress heels.
- **Court Attire** is Business Professional attire and must be worn for any court appearance, whether as a participant in a case, a witness, or an observer. This not only helps maintain decorum but shows respect for the judicial system. Casual attire is prohibited in any courtroom by ICBOC employees. Appropriate clothing includes:
 - Men: Suits, sport coats, ties, dress shirts, and slacks
 - Women: Suits, dresses, skirts, blouses, and slacks

Section B: Grooming and Personal Hygiene

- **Hair Care and Accessories** – Hair should be clean, combed, and neatly trimmed or arranged. Hair should be styled in a manner that does not interfere with job performance. Unkept hair is not permissible regardless of length.
- **Body Art** – In order to ensure a professional environment, visible tattoos with the potential to be perceived by anyone as distracting, derogatory, offensive or controversial should be covered at all times. Face and neck tattoos should be covered at all times.
- **Piercings** – Jewelry and piercings should be kept to a minimum and should not hinder or interfere with job performance. Large hoop earrings that are more than two (2) inches are not allowed. Nose rings are permissible if they are small in size, circular hoops and do not cause distraction in the workplace. Management should contact the County Clerk before directing an employee to remove a piercing.

NOTE: The cost of any covering or removal of body art, tattoos, or body piercings is the responsibility of the employee.

- **Personal Hygiene** – Fragrances such as perfume, cologne, and after-shave should not be excessive or offensive to others. Makeup can be used for enhancing one's appearance. Extreme colors that could detract from a professional image are not acceptable.
- **Reasonable Accommodation for Religious Practices** – Hairstyles, clothing, body art, piercings and/or accessories associated with religious practices will be given appropriate consideration for reasonable accommodation based on the nature of the job and supporting documentation. Employees should consult with their designated Human Resources Representative for reasonable accommodation for religious practices.

Section C: Policy Adherence

1. Employees can be required by any member of management to change inappropriate clothes or be instructed not to wear the same or similar attire in the future. Should it be necessary for the employee to return home to change attire, the employee will be required to use annual leave, compensatory time, personal leave or leave without pay during the period of absence.
2. Ensuring consistent administration of the guidelines of this policy is the responsibility of all levels of management. Decisions regarding the appropriateness of attire and the procedures to be followed will be made on a case-by-case basis by management and the designated County Manager. Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to:
 1. Client or customer proximity.

2. Work function of the unit.
3. Determination that the attire does not comply with this policy.
4. Complaints received.

Employees who do not comply with established dress code standards may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment.

NOTE: Employees who have been provided with shirts or uniforms are expected to wear their county-provided attire. These departments include but may not be limited to the Irwin County Road Department, EMS, Fire Department and Tax Appraisers. Safety concerns prohibit any employee from wearing shorts on the job.

Technology, Email & Internet Use

County-provided technology systems are for official use.

Employees should have no expectation of privacy in County systems. The County reserves the right to monitor, access, and review electronic communications and usage.

Misuse may result in disciplinary action.

Office Telephone/ Office Cell Phone And Personal Cell Phone Use Policy

The County telephone system and devices are for official use only. In the case of a personal emergency, the County will take a message from the caller and notify the employee.

Personal cell phone use should be kept to a minimum. Employees may only use their personal cell phones or communication devices for business purposes and during official or authorized working time. All personal communications should be handled during any break periods and always outside of the view of our citizens/customers/clients. While you are directly communicating with a citizen/customer/client, your cell phone and other mobile devices should be silenced.

Business Equipment Use Policy

The County's electronic mail, phones, and internet systems are County property and are to be used for County business. Excessive use of the County's system for personal business is prohibited.

The County reserves the right to access, review, and disclose information obtained through the County's systems at any time. Employees are required to notify their supervisor and the County's security department if they become aware of any use of the County's systems in violation of the policies set forth in this handbook.

All Internet data that is composed, transmitted, or received via the County owned computer system is considered part of the official records system and as such, is subject

to disclosure law, the Georgia Open Records Act, and the confidentiality/privacy provisions of Federal and State law. As a public record, management retains the right to inspect, copy, or retrieve any data on the computer system without prior approval of the employee. There should be no expectation of privacy when using the County Information System.

Unacceptable and Unethical Uses of Electronic Access:

- Seeking to gain unauthorized access to resources or “hacking” of any computer system.
- No communications are to be vulgar, profane, insulting, offensive, inflammatory, harassing, defamatory, or disruptive to another person’s ability to work. Communications constituting a violation of no harassment/ no discrimination policy are prohibited.
- Illegally downloading software could be a copyright infringement and is never appropriate.
- Alteration or destruction of the integrity of computer-based information.
- Compromising the privacy of users or confidentiality of data.
- Downloading and/or viewing of pornography.
- Playing computer games.
- Propagating chain letters for commercial purposes or in violation of the non-solicitation policy.
- Sending mass and unsolicited emails to County employees and/or citizens/customers/clients regarding any non-business matter, including but not limited to, “junk mails” or “spam e-mails.” Certain County sponsored charities are our exception. Please note that this rule does not include employee’s use of e-mail for statutorily protected communication during non-working time.
- Soliciting or selling non-County products or services in violation of the non-solicitation policy.
- Bulk downloading.

Bring Your Own Device (Byod)

This policy allows Irwin County employees to use personal devices for work-related tasks with prior authorization. While participation is voluntary, employees must understand that any work-related data—including texts and emails—is considered a public record under the **Georgia Open Records Act** and may be subject to legal disclosure. To maintain security, the IT Department requires the installation of **Mobile Device Management (MDM)** software to partition County data, which allows for a "selective wipe" of work information if the device is lost or employment ends.