Employee Handbooks: Risk Management Road Maps

Resource Type: Risk eNews

Topic: HR Risk and Employment Practices

Creating written workplace policies and procedures that are legally up-to-date and easy to follow is as important as having adequate insurance. Policies that are clearly communicated to staff and consistently applied serve to safeguard against improvised solutions that can result in a lawsuit.

Written policies are the starting point for ensuring that personnel dilemmas are resolved consistently and fairly. Moreover, several federal laws and many state laws require that workplaces distribute or post written policies. Up-to-date, legally sound personnel policies are so significant that many insurance companies, funders and potential board members look to a nonprofit's personnel policies as a bellwether of security—or risk. Accordingly, to ensure that the nonprofit's policies are up-to-date, a policy review should be scheduled on an annual basis.

This review may be done internally by a committee or by an outside consultant. The Nonprofit Risk Management Center is available to perform policy reviews on a contractual basis. When conducting a review of existing risk management policies and procedures the Center's staff looks for loopholes, ambiguity, ineffective or impractical language, as well as policies on the books that aren't followed. Our detailed report contains specific recommendations to strengthen policies, as well as redlined versions of the initial policy documents. The Center's staff can also rewrite the organization's policies or create new ones where needed. Most policy review assignments involve a combination of policy review and new policy development. Call us at (202) 785-3891 to talk about your needs as the basis for us writing a proposal to review, rewrite or develop policies.

Items That Might be Covered in an Employee Handbook

The following is a list of some of the policies that might be included in a nonprofit's employee handbook. This list is not exhaustive and there are numerous other policies that some organizations will determine are essential items in an employee handbook.

- Welcome, including handbook use and purpose, at-will employment, right to change policies
- EEO Statement
- Anti-Harassment Policy
- Introductory Period (sometimes inappropriately called the probationary period)
- Employee Classifications
- Nepotism (hiring of relatives) Policy
- Performance Appraisals
- Benefits Summary
- Paid and Unpaid Time Off
- Work Hours, Rest Breaks, Schedules, Timekeeping Requirements, Overtime policy
- Safety Policy, Drug-Free Workplace Policy, Security
- Technology and Privacy Policy (including computers, e-mail, Internet, phones, PDAs and other wireless communications devices, blogs, etc.)
- Punctuality and Attendance

- Confidentiality Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Progressive Discipline Policy (if applicable)

The Nonprofit Risk Management Center welcomes questions and comments at info@nonprofitrisk.org or 703.777.3504.