

TUSCOLA COUNTY

NEPOTISM AND FRATERNIZATION POLICY

A. POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Tuscola County is committed to the highest standards of professional conduct and expects all employees to adhere to them. Tuscola County must take care to ensure that personal and familial relationships do not create favoritism, conflicts of interest or situations that may impair objective judgment. The purpose of this policy is to promote a positive work environment.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

It is Tuscola County's policy to hire, promote and transfer employees on the basis of individual merit and to avoid any suggestion of favoritism or discrimination in making such decisions. The employment of relatives, or individuals involved in personal relationships, in positions where one employee has influence over the terms and conditions of the other's employment is a violation of this policy. Even if favoritism or discrimination is not actually established, the mere existence of a personal or familial relationship between employees may precipitate questions about favoritism or cause discomfort for co-workers.

It is, therefore, the policy of Tuscola County to prohibit the hiring of relatives to positions where a relative would be under the direct or general supervision of an elected official, department head or supervisor, or to employ relatives where the terms and conditions of employment of that person might be influenced by an elected official, department head or supervisor. It is also the policy of Tuscola County that employees involved in a personal relationship may not work directly for, or supervise, the employee with whom he/she is involved. Adherence to this policy will avoid favoritism and discriminatory treatment based on personal or familial relationships

Tuscola County recognizes that there may be existing relationships among employees that are contrary to this policy. It is the purpose of this policy statement to avoid creating any new situations in violation of this policy and not to affect any current employment situation unless favoritism or an actual conflict of interest is established.

3. APPLICABILITY

All employees, elected officials, independent contractors, volunteers and student interns.

4. DEFINITIONS

Relative – Parent, foster parent, spouse, child, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, first cousin, niece, nephew, in-law or step-relative, or any person not related by blood, marriage, or other legal relationship who resides with the employee.

Familial relationship – relationship between individuals who are relatives as defined above.

Personal relationship – relationship between individuals who have a relationship of a romantic or intimate nature.

Economic relationship – relationship in which one employee benefits by receiving financial remuneration from another employee such as landlord/tenant relationships or business partnerships.

Fraternization – relationship of an intimate or romantic nature between a supervisor and his/her subordinate or conduct by a supervisor that creates the appearance or impression that such a relationship exists.

B. PROCEDURE

Tuscola County permits members of the same family and those involved in personal relationships to work at the county. However, the county will not authorize an appointment, transfer, promotion, or new hire where employment would result in a supervisor-subordinate relationship between relatives or between individuals involved in a personal relationship.

The following rules govern the employment of relatives:

- a. No employee will be permitted to participate in the hiring of, recommend the hiring of, or hire a relative.
- b. One relative may not supervise another relative or work in a position which has any direct or general supervisory authority over the other relative.
- c. Relatives will not be involved in evaluating each other's job performance or in making recommendations for salary adjustments, promotions or other decisions.
- d. Any existing familial relationships that predate this policy are exempt under this policy. However, steps should be taken, if possible, to remove any direct supervisory relationship between relatives.
- e. If an existing employment relationship between relatives is changed so that a direct supervisory relationship no longer exists, e.g., the relative is in a position that no longer directly reports to the relative supervisor, this policy will apply to future employment decisions, e.g., the relative's supervisor then cannot reemploy the relative in a directly subordinate position.

The same restrictions applicable to the employment of relatives are placed on supervisors who have an economic relationship with applicants or other employees.

The following rules govern the employment of individuals involved in personal relationships:

- a. An employee who is involved in a personal relationship with another employee may not work directly for, or supervise, the employee with whom he/she is involved.
- b. If a personal relationship exists, it is the responsibility and obligation of the employees involved to disclose the existence of the relationship to the elected official, department head, or supervisor. If the County determines that a conflict affecting employment or a potential for conflict exists because of the personal

relationship, the employees involved will be given the opportunity to decide which employee will be transferred to another position or terminated if no position is available. If the employees do not decide, the County will make the decision.

- c. Supervisors are prohibited from dating subordinates or any type of fraternization and may be disciplined for such action, up to and including termination.

Tuscola County reserves the right to take prompt action if an actual or potential conflict of interest arises concerning individuals who occupy positions at any level (higher or lower) in the same line of authority that may affect employment decisions.

Pre-existing relationships are subject to restriction and will be deemed a violation of this policy if actual favoritism or conflict of interest is found.

Any employee who feels aggrieved by the provisions of this policy shall have the right to utilize the Grievance Procedures in the Tuscola County Personnel Manual.