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## Feedback Requested: Fraternalization in the Workplace Policy and Employment of Relatives/Family Members Policy

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*Published 6/08/2021 1:14 PM CT*

Illinois Heartland Library System is in the process of finalizing components for the updated IHLS Personnel Code, and several new policies have been proposed, including:

- Fraternalization in the Workplace Policy
- Employment of Relatives/Family Members Policy

These policies have been vetted by legal counsel and were reviewed in a first reading at the Illinois Heartland Library System Board of Directors meeting on April 27, 2021. They are now being sent for member comment. Members of Illinois Heartland Library System are encouraged to review the proposed policies and share their comments. To make a comment, please use the form below.

### Fraternalization in the Workplace

Illinois Heartland Library System has created this policy to nurture a working environment in which employees maintain clear boundaries between employee personal and business relationships so as to be most effective for conducting business. Illinois Heartland Library System does not prohibit friendships or romantic relationships between employees but seeks to set forth clear guidelines as to how relationships should be conducted in the workplace.

- **Discouraging Workplace Personal Relationships** – Illinois Heartland Library System discourages, but does not forbid, fraternization between managers or supervisors and subordinate employees.

Romantic or intimate relationships between managers or supervisors and subordinate employees create an unreasonable possibility of favoritism, conflicts of interest, and claims of sexual harassment. Such relationships may also create serious problems in terms of objective management, accurate evaluations, and discipline.

- **Reporting Workplace Relationships** – For these reasons, any employee who is involved in a romantic or intimate relationship, not necessarily limited to sexual relationships, with any other employee must report the relationship to Human Resources. Such information will be treated by IHLS as confidentially as possible, consistent with the IHLS's legitimate business needs. Failure to report such relationships may result in disciplinary action, up to, and including, discharge.
- **Company's Rights** – Where such an intimate relationship exists, IHLS reserves the right to make such employment decisions as are necessary to ensure that the risks enumerated above regarding the relationship will not occur. Such steps include but are not limited to: transfer of one or both parties to the relationship; required resignation of one of the parties in the relationship (in such cases, the decision as to which employee will resign will be left to the two employees); or adjusting lines of reporting or communication.
- **Agreement** – In cases where a consensual personal relationship exists, the parties will be required to sign an agreement acknowledging that the relationship exists and that it is consensual and the agreement will further instruct each party to immediately notify Human Resources should the relationship at any time become non-consensual so that IHLS can ensure that no violation of IHLS's No Harassment policy has occurred and, if it has, IHLS can take prompt, appropriate remedial action to ensure the harassment stops. Moreover, in order to maintain the avoidance of favoritism in the workplace and to ensure that all employees of IHLS are comfortable in the work environment, employees who are involved in a personal romantic relationship are absolutely prohibited from engaging in displays of affection (such as kissing, hand-holding, or other similar personal contact) while in IHLS and anywhere on IHLS premises during working time.
- **Refusal of Employment Modifications** – As detailed above, it may be necessary to modify reporting structures, transfer positions, or make other necessary adjustments to employment. Refusal of reasonable modification to an employee's position will be deemed a voluntary resignation.
- **Conduct During Non-Work Time** – During non-working time, including lunch, breaks, and before or after work periods, employees may engage in appropriate personal conversations in non-work areas as long as such conversations and behavior do not violate IHLS's policy against workplace harassment and as long as the employees avoid displays of affection such as kissing, hugging, etc., at all times while on IHLS premises.
- **Off-Duty Conduct** – Employee conduct outside of working hours and outside IHLS premises is generally regarded as private, as long as such conduct does not create problems within the workplace. An exception to this rule is romantic relationships between supervisors and subordinates or between employees, which must be reported as set forth above. In addition, IHLS strongly discourages off-duty fraternization to include attendance at happy hours or similar events involving supervisors/managers and non-supervisory employees.
- **Physical Contact** – Employees are prohibited from engaging in physical contact that would be considered inappropriate by a reasonable person on IHLS property, in the presence of customers, or during any IHLS-related business.
- **Harassment** – Employees should be mindful the organization maintains a strict anti- harassment policy.
- **Employee Appeals** – Any employee who believes that he or she has been adversely affected as a result of this policy, or who believes that this policy is not being adhered to, should speak with Human Resources.

# Employment of Relatives/Family Members

## Objective

IHLS is committed to a policy of employment and advancement based on qualifications and merit and does not discriminate in favor of or in opposition to the employment of family members. However, at the same time, IHLS recognizes the potential for favoritism or the appearance of favoritism when one employee is related to another, especially when there is a direct reporting relationship between the two employees. IHLS strongly believes in a work environment where employees maintain clear boundaries between business relationships and familial relationships.

## Scope

Due to potential for perceived or actual conflicts, such as favoritism or personal conflicts from outside the work environment, which can be carried into the daily working relationship, IHLS will hire a family member (as defined below) of persons currently employed only if: a) the candidate for employment will not be working directly for or supervising a relative, and b) the candidate for employment will not occupy a position in the same line of authority in which employees can initiate or participate in decisions involving a direct benefit to the relative. Such decisions include hiring, retention, transfer, promotion, wages, leave requests, benefits, or any other aspect of employment.

This policy applies to all current employees and candidates for employment.

## Definitions

"Family member" is defined as one of the following: spouse or significant other, parent/stepparent, child/stepchild, grandparent, grandchild, brother/brother-in-law, sister/sister-in-law, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin, in-laws (father, mother, son, daughter).

## Procedure

To ensure compliance with this policy, our employment application requests all applicants to inform IHLS if they know or are related to any current employee. This is addressed so that we may be aware of relationships that would impact the work environment for all staff and the substance of this policy.

The hiring supervisor is responsible for ensuring policy compliance. Department directors are responsible for monitoring changes in employee reporting relations after initial hire to ensure compliance with this policy. Employees are responsible for immediately reporting any changes to their supervisor and to Human Resources.

If any employee, after employment or change in employment, enters into one of the above relationships, the employees involved must notify Human Resources immediately of the relationship status so that Human Resources can take appropriate action to protect all employees and IHLS. Depending upon all the relevant circumstances, IHLS will take appropriate action to ensure this policy is not violated. Such action may include, but is not limited to, reassignment of one or both of the involved employees or other action so that there is a change in the reporting relationship. The involved employees will have input into the change in position and while the involved employees' desires will be taken into consideration, the final decision as to how a change in position(s) will occur, so as to avoid a situation where this policy is violated will lie in the sole discretion of the Executive Director.

It is possible, in exceptional circumstances, that IHLS may permit two family members (as that term is defined herein) to remain in a reporting relationship. However, any exception to this policy must have the written consent of the Executive Director.

Public comment will close after **Friday, July 2, 2021**. IHLS Personnel Committee will review the comments at their next meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, July 6, 2021.

## Comments

### Off Duty Fraternalization (/comment/2659#comment-2659)

*Permalink (/comment/2659#comment-2659) Submitted by Betsy Mahoney (not verified) on Wed, 06/16/2021 - 15:04*

"In addition, IHLS strongly discourages off-duty fraternization to include attendance at happy hours or similar events involving supervisors/managers and non-supervisory employees." How would staff ensure compliance at conference social hours or group dinners when traveling? Would you consider all time spent at conferences or traveling as on duty?

### Fraternalization (/comment/2661#comment-2661)

*Permalink (/comment/2661#comment-2661) Submitted by gfe@greenfieldpl.org (not verified) on Thu, 06/17/2021 - 14:02*

Just one employee here, but I can see this being a problem elsewhere

### Fraternalization (/comment/2667#comment-2667)

*Permalink (/comment/2667#comment-2667) Submitted by Robin Gerald (not verified) on Wed, 06/30/2021 - 10:38*

There should not be any prohibitions on fraternization after work hours and off the premises.  
Shouldn't have to sign an agreement stating in a relationship and consensual.

### Fraternalization and Nepotism (/comment/2670#comment-2670)

*Permalink (/comment/2670#comment-2670) Submitted by Jo Keillor (not verified) on Wed, 06/30/2021 - 13:49*

Very well expressed and both are necessary to have established prior to a problem.

### Employment of Family Members (/comment/2672#comment-2672)

*Permalink (/comment/2672#comment-2672) Submitted by Susan Colbert (not verified) on Wed, 06/30/2021 - 15:14*

I have two sets of related family members on my staff. One is mother/son and the other is sister-in-laws. The only time this has caused a problem is vacations. Several times I have had family vacations take two staff members at a time. This depletes my workforce by 1/3. All my staff are part-time and none of them have paid vacations. This may not be an issue for IHLS, but I thought I'd bring it up because it has been an issue for me.

### Employment of relatives (/comment/2674#comment-2674)

*Permalink (/comment/2674#comment-2674) Submitted by Beth Fuchs (not verified) on Fri, 07/02/2021 - 05:06*

We have several board members who are first cousins of our librarian. Is this included in these rules?

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## Feedback Requested: Whistleblower Policy

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*Published 6/08/2021 3:35 PM CT*

Illinois Heartland Library System is seeking feedback from its members on the recently proposed Whistleblower Policy. This policy has been vetted by legal counsel and the Illinois Heartland Library System Board of Directors reviewed it in a first reading on Tuesday, May 25, 2021.

This policy puts into writing protections for staff who bring forward concerns of IHLS-related activity believed to be unlawful or fraudulent. The purpose of this policy is to encourage and enable IHLS staff to raise concerns regarding suspected illegal or unethical conduct, practices, or violations of IHLS policies on a confidential basis and protect the employees from retaliation for raising such concerns.

Members of Illinois Heartland Library System are encouraged to review the proposed policy and share their comments. To make a member comment, please use the comment form below.

## WHISTLEBLOWER COMPLIANCE

**Policy:** IHLS requires its directors, employees, and volunteers to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in their conduct in connection with the performance of their job duties and responsibilities. As employees and representatives of IHLS, everyone must at all times be completely honest in all dealings with IHLS and demonstrate the highest level of integrity in fulfilling job responsibilities. Compliance with all federal, state, and local laws is essential.

The purpose of this policy is to: (a) encourage and enable individuals to raise concerns regarding suspected illegal or unethical conduct or practices or violations of IHLS policies on a confidential and, if desired, anonymous basis, (b) protect employees from retaliation for raising such concerns, and (c) establish procedures for IHLS to receive and investigate reported concerns and address and correct inappropriate conduct and/or actions.

**Reporting Responsibility:** Each employee has the responsibility to report in good faith any concerns about actual or perceived violations of IHLS policies or any federal, state, or local law, or regulation governing IHLS. Appropriate concerns to report under this policy include but are not limited to: audit or accounting issues, financial improprieties, ethical violations, fraud, theft, embezzlement, bribery or kickbacks, misuse of IHLS property or assets, undisclosed conflicts of interest, dishonesty, harassment or discrimination, or any other conduct that is unlawful.

Whistleblower protection covered under this policy includes: (a) an employee's report to a supervisor or a public body of an activity, inaction, policy, or practice implemented by IHLS that the employee reasonably believes is a violation of a law, rule, or regulation, (b) an employee assisting or participating in a proceeding to enforce the provisions of the Illinois Equal Pay Act (or any other federal, state, or local law, regulation, rule or ordinance).

A whistleblower also includes an employee of IHLS who reports an activity related to IHLS (internally to supervision or externally to any government agency or authority) that they consider to be illegal or dishonest. The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate management officials (or government agencies, if applicable) are charged with these responsibilities.

An example of an illegal or dishonest activity is a violation of federal, state or local laws or financial wrongdoing. If an employee has knowledge of or a concern about illegal or dishonest fraudulent activity, the employee is to contact Human Resources. If the employee is not comfortable reporting the issue to Human Resources, the employee may instead contact the Executive Director.

**Acting in Good Faith:** Anyone reporting a concern under this policy must act in good faith and have reasonable grounds to believe that the information disclosed indicates a violation of law, regulations, and/or ethical standards or policies of IHLS. Any unfounded allegation that proves to have been made maliciously, recklessly, or knowingly false will be viewed as a serious offense and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

**No Retaliation:** No employee who in good faith reports a concern, participates in an investigation or makes a good faith report to an outside governmental agency shall be subject to adverse employment consequences because of such report or participation. This protection extends to employees who report in good faith, even if the allegations are, after an investigation, not substantiated.

Any IHLS representative who retaliates against an employee who has made a good faith report as described herein or who has participated in an investigation relating to such a report will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

Any employee who believes that he or she (or another employee) has been subjected to harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequences as a result of making a good faith report or participating in an investigation must contact Human Resources.

**Confidentiality:** IHLS encourages an employee who reports concerns covered by this policy to identify himself or herself in order to facilitate the investigation. However, such concerns may be submitted in a confidential and/or anonymous basis. IHLS will take reasonable steps to protect the identity of the individual and shall keep reports made under this policy as confidential as possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation and applicable law.

**All reports of illegal and dishonest activities or retaliation should be promptly submitted to Human Resources for investigating and coordinating corrective action. In the event the employee is not comfortable reporting such issues to Human Resources, the employee may instead contact the Executive Director. If the employee is not comfortable reporting such issues to either Human**

**Resources or the Executive Director, reports of illegal or dishonest activities, violations of any federal, state or local law or regulation, or any incident of retaliation should be promptly submitted to the President of the IHLS Board of Directors.**

Public comment will close after **Friday, July 2, 2021**. IHLS Personnel Committee will review the comments at their next meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, July 6, 2021.

## Comments

### Whistleblower (/comment/2660#comment-2660)

*Permalink (/comment/2660#comment-2660) Submitted by Brenda Shipley (not verified) on Thu, 06/17/2021 - 13:58*

Sounds ok to me

### Whistleblower (/comment/2666#comment-2666)

*Permalink (/comment/2666#comment-2666) Submitted by Robin Geraldts (not verified) on Wed, 06/30/2021 - 10:30*

Looks good

### Whistleblower (/comment/2669#comment-2669)

*Permalink (/comment/2669#comment-2669) Submitted by Jo Keillor (not verified) on Wed, 06/30/2021 - 13:42*

This is good and, in today's world, is essential.

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## Feedback Requested: Holiday & Personal Leave Policies

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*Published 6/11/2021 10:00 AM CT*

Illinois Heartland Library System Personnel Committee and the Board of Directors are actively involved in updating the IHLS Personnel Code. One of these updates include changes to the Holiday and Personal Leave policies. The various departments and staff at IHLS serve as one company, and the goal of the updates to these policies is to set an equal amount of time off between these various departments within the organization.

These policies were reviewed in a first reading at the Illinois Heartland Library System Board of Directors meeting on May 25, 2021, and they are now being sent out for member comment. Members of Illinois Heartland Library System are encouraged to review the proposed policies and share their comments. To make a member comment, please use the comments form below.

### Holidays

IHLS observes ten paid holidays annually: New Year's Day; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Thanksgiving Day and the day following; Christmas Eve Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve.

A holiday schedule is posted at the beginning of each fiscal year on the IHLS website and on our IHLS intranet. Holidays falling on a Saturday will be observed on the preceding Friday. Holidays falling on a Sunday will be observed the following Monday. The only exception to this rule is if IHLS is already observing that day as a Holiday. Please refer to the holiday schedule for exact dates in which IHLS observes as a Holiday.

The following conditions apply to IHLS Holiday pay policy:

- Employees who work 30 hours or more in a scheduled work week will receive a paid holiday.
- Employees that work 30-39 hours per week will receive holiday pay at a prorated rate. The prorated rate will be determined based on your routinely scheduled work week. *For example, if you work 32 hours a week you will be paid 6.4 hours of Holiday Pay (32/40 \*8hr)*

- Holiday hours will be paid in 8- hour increments for full time employees.
- If a holiday falls on your normally scheduled day off, you will be given a floating holiday to ensure that you receive 10 holidays annually.
- Holiday pay will not be considered as time worked for the purpose of overtime calculations.
- In the event an employee works on a holiday, he/she will accrue holiday hours that they may choose another day off in lieu of the scheduled holiday. Any holiday hours must be taken by the end of the fiscal year in which they are received, or they will be lost.
- All non-exempt employees that are required to work on a holiday will receive pay at time and a half.
- To accommodate employees of varying religions, employees may choose to work one of the above listed holidays and use that time to be absent during a religious holiday of their choice. This must be preapproved by your supervisor. Any holiday hours must be taken by the end of the fiscal year in which they are received, or they will be lost.
- Holiday leave hours earned will not be paid out upon termination.

## Personal Leave

### Eligibility

Personal leave is provided to all employees both full and part-time employees. For record-keeping purposes, IHLS will issue employees' personal leave up front as of July 1 of every fiscal year. Personal leave allotment begins upon hire or transfer into an eligible position, as noted above. Personal leave is prorated for new hires based on the employee start date.

### Allotment Rate

Employee Type	Personal Leave
Employees working 40 hours a week	40 hours
Employees working 30-39 hours a week	Prorated *
Employees working 29 hours or less a week	16 hours

*\*For example, an employee who works 32 hours per week is eligible for 32 hours of personal leave (32/40\* 40)*

Personal leave must be taken by the end of the fiscal year in which they are received, or they will be lost.

The following conditions apply to IHLS personal leave policy:

- To take personal leave, an employee must notify the supervisor prior to the day of absence, if possible, or satisfy the notification set forth in the Attendance Policy.
- Although personal leave may be scheduled for use the day before or after a paid holiday or to extend vacations or weekends, this type of scheduling is dependent upon the advance approval of the supervisor. Consideration will be given to whether the hours can be covered by other staff members.
- Personal leave will not be paid out upon termination.
- Personal leave will not be considered as time worked for the purpose of overtime calculations.
- Hours per week are based on the employee's offer letter or employee change form.

Member comment will close after **Friday, July 2, 2021**. IHLS Personnel Committee will review the comments at their next meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, July 6, 2021.

## Comments

### Holiday & Personal Leave (/comment/2662#comment-2662)

*Permalink (/comment/2662#comment-2662) Submitted by gfe@greenfieldpl.org (not verified) on Thu, 06/17/2021 - 14:09*

My library board makes these decisions

### Holidays/Personal leave (/comment/2668#comment-2668)

*Permalink (/comment/2668#comment-2668) Submitted by Robin Geraldts (not verified) on Wed, 06/30/2021 - 10:43*

Looks good

### Holidays and Personal Leave (/comment/2671#comment-2671)

*Permalink (/comment/2671#comment-2671) Submitted by Jo Keillor (not verified) on Wed, 06/30/2021 - 13:51*

Good to have these clearly spelled out.

### Holidays and personal days (/comment/2673#comment-2673)

*Permalink (/comment/2673#comment-2673) Submitted by Beth Fuchs (not verified) on Fri, 07/02/2021 - 04:54*

Are personal days considered sick days too?

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