



**Illinois Heartland Library System**  
IMAGINING TOMORROW - DELIVERING POSSIBILITIES TODAY

# Employee Handbook

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Table will be reorganized to reflect changes in the flow of the handbook.

Greetings IHLS Teammate,

I would like to welcome you to the Illinois Heartland System family! You had the spark that we could not let pass us by, and together I hope we can work to build one another while working to expand this wonderful organization.

We see one another as more than fellow employees, we are a family. We value the relationships inside and outside of this organization equally and strive daily to maintain a healthy and open flow of information and communication with one another. Our goal is to create a healthy and happy workplace where both members and employees feel valued. Building strong relationships within the workplace and the community are a part of our IHLS value system

On July 1, 2011 Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) was formed through a merger established by the Illinois State Library. This merger consisted of four regional library systems in central and southern Illinois (Lewis & Clark, Lincoln Trail, Rolling Prairie and Shawnee). Statewide there are now a total of three library systems, The Chicago Public Library System, The Reaching Across Illinois Libraries Systems (RAILS) and IHLS. The System is supported by the annual System Area and Per Capita Grant (SAPG) administered by the Illinois State Library, and by fees for services provided to member libraries.

As the Executive Director, my responsibility is to support the mission, vision and values of the organization. I support the System by administering policies approved by the Board of Directors and procedures established by our leadership staff.

The information in this handbook should be used to aid in your introduction to IHLS, and outlines our expectations of employees and the policies, programs, and benefits available. You should familiarize yourself with the contents as soon as possible, as it will answer many of the questions about employment with our organization. Please keep it handy for future reference. If anything within this handbook is unclear or raises questions about any aspect of your employment, please contact your Manager. We hope that your experience with IHLS will be challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding.

Leslie M. Bednar, MLS  
Executive Director

# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Purpose of Code

The purpose of this Employee handbook is to provide insights into Illinois Heartland Library System (IHLS) and who we are. This handbook will also aid employees in the performance of their responsibilities as members of the IHLS family and to provide a common understanding for the way we strive to serve.

The contents of this handbook do not constitute an expression of or an implied employment contract between IHLS and any of its employees. IHLS cannot foresee every circumstance or question about policy. As changes happen within the organization, there may be a need to modify policies in the handbook. IHLS therefore reserves the right to revise, supplement, deviate from or rescind any policies or portion of this handbook as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. Illinois Heartland Library System will make every effort to notify employees of such changes as they occur.

This Employee handbook is not a guarantee of any fixed terms of employment. IHLS is an at-will employer; therefore, continued employment of all employees is subject to the general discretion of the Executive Director. This means that either the employee or the company may terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without notice.

Nothing in this employee handbook is intended to or creates an employment agreement, express or implied. Nothing contained in this or any other document provided to the employee is intended to be, nor should it be, construed as a contract that employment or any benefit will be continued for any period of time.

It is the responsibility of the employee to read this handbook in its entirety and become familiar with its contents. Some subjects within this handbook have additional information regarding specific policies. Any additional information can be obtained from the Human Resources department.

As circumstances change, IHLS reserves the right to revise, interpret, or discontinue specific policies and/or procedures. Any such changes to this handbook must be approved by the Executive Director and the Board of Directors.

## II. Employment at Will

Employment at IHLS is on an at-will basis unless otherwise stated in a written individual employment agreement signed by the Executive Director.

In addition, no company representative is authorized to modify this policy for any employee or to enter into any agreement, oral or written, that changes the at-will relationship.

Any salary figures provided to an employee in annual or monthly terms are stated for the sake of convenience or to facilitate comparisons and are not intended and do not create an employment contract for any specific period of time.

Nothing in this statement is intended to interfere with, restrain, or prevent concerted activity as protected by the National Labor Relations Act. Such activity includes employee communications regarding wages, hours, or other terms or conditions of employment. IHLS employees have the right to engage in or refrain from such activities.

### A. Equal Employment Opportunity & Discrimination

Illinois Heartland Library System provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, gender identity, results of genetic testing, or service in the military. Equal employment opportunity applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leave of absence, compensation, and training.

IHLS expressly prohibits any form of unlawful employee harassment or discrimination based on any of the characteristics mentioned above. Improper interference with the ability of other employees to perform their expected job duties is absolutely not tolerated.

Any employees with questions or concerns about equal employment opportunities in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of a Human Resources representative. IHLS will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who raise issues of equal employment opportunity. If an employee feels he or she has been subjected to any such retaliation, he or she should bring it to the attention of a Human Resources representative.

Retaliation means adverse conduct taken because an individual reported an actual or perceived violation of this policy, opposed practices prohibited by this policy, or

participated in the reporting and investigation process described below. “Adverse conduct” includes but is not limited to:

- (1) shunning and avoiding an individual who reports harassment, discrimination or retaliation;
- (2) express or implied threats or intimidation intended to prevent an individual from reporting harassment, discrimination or retaliation; or
- (3) denying employment benefits because an applicant or employee reported harassment, discrimination or retaliation or participated in the reporting and investigation process.

Complaints of discrimination, including illegal harassment, should be filed according to the procedures described in the Explanation Regarding Discrimination (Appendix A Part B).

## B. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Reasonable Accommodation

To ensure equal employment opportunities to qualified individuals with a disability, IHLS will make reasonable accommodations for the reported disability of an otherwise qualified individual, unless undue hardship on the operation of the business would be the result of the accommodation.

Employees who may require a reasonable accommodation should discuss the matter with the Human Resources Department.

All employees have an opportunity to participate and contribute to the success of the business and are valued for their skills, experience, and unique perspectives. IHLS is committed to creating and maintaining a workplace that fosters this environment. This commitment is embodied in company policy, and the way we work with one another at IHLS.

## C. Hiring

### 1. Position Descriptions

The IHLS Personnel Committee reviews all job descriptions. The Executive Director has final authority for salary matters within the parameters established by the Board-approved pay range schedule. Each year during the performance evaluation process, position descriptions will be reviewed and updated to ensure relevance and efficiency. A current signed job description will always be kept in each employee’s file.

## 2. Recruitment

IHLS encourages all qualified individuals to apply for vacant positions. While it is the desire to fill vacant positions from within, it may sometimes be necessary to recruit locally, regionally or nationally.

Staff applying for a position should indicate in writing of their interest in being considered for a position. An updated resume should accompany the letter of interest. Falsification of information on a cover letter, application, or resume will be considered cause for discharge. Applications will be retained as prescribed by law.

Positions will be filled with the best qualified applicant. The selection process at IHLS is competitive. The best qualified person will be determined by, but will not be limited to education, technical or professional training, levels of expertise (skills, knowledge, and abilities), interviews, background and reference checks, fit for duty physicals and pre-employment drug screening.

## 3. Offers of Employment

All letters of offer must be in writing from the Human Resources department. It should be understood that such letters of offer do not constitute a contract for employment. Offer letters may be contingent upon a fit for duty exam, successful drug screen and background check. Background checks, fit for duty exam and pre-employment drug screens will be at the expense of IHLS. High school students may submit the results of a recent school physical in lieu of having a fit for duty physical. No person will be denied employment by reason of a physical or mental handicap that, with reasonable accommodations, does not prevent the performance of essential functions of the position to be filled.

## 4. Probationary Period

All new employees and current employees promoted to a higher job classification will have a probationary period of 90 days. During this period, the employee is mentored, trained, and evaluated to help him or her achieve effective job performance. A 90-day performance evaluation will be completed by the employee and manager to determine if the employee should continue in the position. The results will be reviewed by the supervisor, the manager and the HR Representative.

The Executive Director may take the following actions at any time during the probationary period, when it is determined that an employee will not be successful in his or her new position with IHLS:

- Have the employee's probationary period extended up to six (6) months,

- Have the employee demoted, returned to a prior position, or transferred to another position (if the employee was promoted),
- Discharge the employee with no further re-employment rights.

## D. Employment Definitions

1. All employees fall within one of the following categories that are relevant in determining eligibility for benefits:
  - a. 1-29 hours per week (Regular Part-Time)
  - b. 30-40 hours per week (Regular Full-Time)

Regular, Full-Time. Employees who are not in a temporary status and work a minimum of 30 hours weekly and maintain continuous employment status. Generally, these employees are eligible for the full-time benefits package and are subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefits program.

Regular, Part-Time. Employees who are not in a temporary status and who are regularly scheduled to work fewer than 30 hours weekly, and who maintain continuous employment status. Part-time employees are eligible for some of the benefits offered by the company and are subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefits program.

Temporary, Full-Time. Employees who are hired as interim replacements to temporarily supplement the workforce or to assist in the completion of a specific project and who are temporarily scheduled to work the company's full-time schedule for a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status.

Temporary, Part-Time. Employees who are hired as interim replacements to temporarily supplement the workforce or to assist in the completion of a specific project and who are temporarily scheduled to work fewer than 30 hours weekly for a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status.

2. All employees also fall within one of the following classifications:
  - a. Library professional – salaries and wages paid to employees of IHLS whose position descriptions ordinarily require an MLS, MIS or above.



- b. Other professional – salaries or wages paid to employees of IHLS whose position descriptions ordinarily require a bachelor’s degree or above, excluding library professional.
  - c. Support services – salaries or wages paid to employees of IHLS whose positions are not classified as library professional or other professionals.
3. All positions fall under the following categories to ensure compliance with the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act:
- a. Exempt employee – Salaried employees in executive, administrative, learned professional and certain employees in computer-related positions as defined by the U.S. Department of Labor are exempt from pay for overtime.
  - b. Non-exempt employee – Employees who are paid on an hourly or salaried basis and whose customary and regular duties and responsibilities are not considered exempt by the U.S. Department of Labor and are entitled to the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

## E. Termination of Employment

Separation from employment with IHLS may be the result of several circumstances which include retirement, resignation, or termination. An employee separating from IHLS service must return all IHLS property by the last day of employment.

Separating employees will receive a final check on the next regular payday, which will include pay for all accrued but unused annual personal days and vacation hours calculated at the current salary. All employee benefits, except those benefits which are available to employees under state or federal law at the employee’s own expense, will be terminated based on the terms of each insurance policy.

### 1. Resignation

Resignations must be submitted by an employee to his/her immediate supervisor in writing. Professional staff members are requested to give at least four weeks’ notice of their intent to resign. All other employees are requested to give at least two weeks’ notice. It is the employee's responsibility to make arrangements with the Human Resources Office concerning his or her benefits and final payment for accrued benefits and wages.

Employees who are absent from work for three consecutive days without providing proper notice may be considered to have voluntarily resigned from employment with IHLS.

## 2. Lay Off

Lay Off usually occurs because of circumstances such as a general reduction in the workforce, reorganization, or the termination of an activity or program that results in a reduction in the needed workforce.

In the event that a reduction in workforce becomes necessary, consideration will be given to the needs of IHLS and its members, the quality of each employee's current and past performance, and the seniority of employees holding positions with IHLS.

Employees who must be separated from service will be given a minimum one-months' notice in writing.

Additional details are provided in the Severance Procedure.

Employees who have been laid off for six months or less may be recalled for any available position for which they can perform the required work in an effective manner. Every attempt will be made to return the employee to a job comparable in salary to the position held prior to layoff. Any and all recall rights will be cancelled should an employee decline any recall to any position for which the employee is qualified and which is comparable in salary to the position held prior to layoff.

## 3. For Cause

Termination for cause (or dismissal) refers to the termination of an employee because of misconduct or unsatisfactory performance. Termination for misconduct is usually swift and without notice. Any recommendations for termination for cause must be reviewed by the HR Representative and approved by the Executive Director and subject to the approval of the Board.

## 4. Retirement

System employees who qualify for retirement should consult with the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund for details and are required to provide notice in the same manner as is required for employees resigning.

Employees may also contact the Social Security Administration, as appropriate.

## F. Performance Evaluations

The goal of IHLS is to deliver an oral and/or written performance evaluation to each employee by his/her supervisor and reviewed by the Human Resources Department on an annual basis. IHLS recognizes effective staff development is dependent upon continuous feedback on performance between supervisors and employees. These interactions are intended to create an atmosphere of growth and empowerment. Performance reviews also provide an opportunity for employees to provide input for improvement of System services to employees and members.

A copy of all performance reviews are retained as part of the permanent personnel record for each employee. Current reviews may be used for several factors including, but not limited to, merit increases, promotions, corrective counseling, employee motivation, and for the retention or dismissal of an employee. Previous reviews may also be used to identify performance trends.

## G. Discipline

As part of a healthy supervisor-employee interaction, one of the roles of the supervisor is to provide the employee adequate and timely information about job expectations and regular feedback on job performance. The purpose of the procedure is to improve employee performance and encourage modification of specific workplace behavior. The objective is not to punish the employee, but to alert him or her to the need for improvement. Unless the performance or behavior is severe, employees are given an opportunity to improve. Most areas of improvement can be corrected quickly and informally.

In instances where improvement does not occur, the supervisor may initiate formal corrective action. The process for doing so is called progressive discipline, which generally uses increasingly severe steps or measures when an employee's performance or workplace behavior fails to improve after being given a reasonable opportunity to do so.

There are four formal levels of discipline—verbal warning, written warning, final warning, and involuntary termination of employment. These actions may be taken sequentially depending on the number of factors including, but not limited to, the severity or persistence of the deficiency and/or any prior corrective action(s) taken against the employee. Employees may appeal the corrective action(s) taken against them with the Human Resources representative and the Executive Director in accordance with the Grievance procedure.

This policy, in its entirety, can be obtained from the Human Resources department or a supervisor should any questions or assistance be needed.

Outlined below are the steps of Illinois Heartland Library System's corrective action procedure. IHLS reserves the right to combine or skip steps depending on the facts of the situation and the nature of the offense. The level of disciplinary involvement may also vary, IHLS reserves the right to skip discipline levels dependent on the severity of the offense.

Step 1: Counseling and Verbal Warning

Step 2: Written Warning

Step 3: Final Warning- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

Step 4: Involuntary Termination

Employees will have the opportunity to present information that may challenge information management has used to issue discipline.

## H. Grievance Procedure

Any employee may present his or her perspective in disagreement of an action by his or her supervisor with respect to compensation, conditions of work, or discipline by filing a grievance. The grievance procedure is described in the detailed Procedure Document, which can be obtained and discussed in the Human Resources Department.