



# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

**Washington Research Library Consortium**

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# WRLC Handbook

## Welcome to the Washington Research Library Consortium!

The Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) Employee Handbook contains information to acquaint you with the WRLC and to help guide you during your employment with us. I encourage you to discuss any questions you have about your employment with your immediate supervisor, the Director of Finance and Administration or the Executive Director.

The Handbook includes information about:

- The history of the WRLC
- Employee expectations
- Compensation and benefits
- Health and safety issues
- Nondiscrimination and other legal protections
- Services, facilities, and resources available to WRLC employees

This Handbook is presented for information purposes only, and supersedes earlier versions. **It is not an enforceable contract. Nothing in this Employee Handbook confers contractual rights upon you or changes your status as an at-will employee.** It has been reviewed and approved by the WRLC Board of Directors. This Handbook represents our best effort to outline those policies that govern our work together; however, we cannot anticipate all possible situations. Thus, this Handbook does not contain all the policies and procedures, rights, and restrictions that affect your employment with the WRLC.

The WRLC will inform employees of changes but reserves the right to make such changes without prior notice, and to not apply policies or provisions at any time for any reason. Nothing in this Handbook creates, or is intended to create, a promise of continued employment. Employment may be terminated at the will of the employee or the WRLC at any time for any reason not prohibited by law, with or without cause.

*Kimberly Armstrong*

Executive Director

January 1, 2025

# The History of the Washington Research Library Consortium

The Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1987 by eight universities in the Washington, DC metropolitan area to expand and enhance the information resources available to their students and faculty.

The WRLC is governed by a Board of Directors that consists primarily of administrators from the partner universities with responsibility for the library. A WRLC Library Directors Council advises the Board and the WRLC by providing guidance and direction on programs, operations, policy, budgets, and other matters of import to the work of the WRLC, the Consortium, and the individual libraries. The universities include:

1. American University
2. The Catholic University of America
3. Gallaudet University
4. George Mason University
5. George Washington University
6. Georgetown University
7. Howard University (joined WRLC in 2012)
8. Marymount University
9. The University of the District of Columbia

## Programs and services

WRLC provides these mission-critical services to the member universities:

- **Information technology supporting library operations**
- **Technical support for licensed online resources.**
- **Systems and services to support consortial borrowing**
- **Offsite library facility to free valuable space in campus libraries**
- **High-density, environmentally-controlled storage for library materials**
- **A collaborative partnership of shared resources, services, and expertise.**

# 1. Recruiting and Hiring

## 101 Business Ethics and Conduct

The WRLC will comply with all applicable laws and regulations and expects its directors, managers, supervisors, and employees to conduct business in accordance with the letter, spirit, and intent of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, violent, dishonest, or unethical conduct.

If a situation arises where it is difficult to determine the proper course of action, the matter should be discussed with your immediate supervisor, department director, Director of Finance and Administration or the Executive Director.

If any employee reasonably believes that some policy, practice, or activity of The Washington Research Library Consortium (“WRLC”) is illegal or dishonest, a written complaint must be filed by that employee with the person(s) listed in the Whistleblower Policy. Federal and state laws, as well as WRLC’s Whistleblower Policy (see below) protect employees who file reports of activities that are reasonably believed to amount to the commission of an offense or possible offense that would violate federal or state laws.

## 103 Equal Employment Opportunity

In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions at the WRLC will be based on merit, qualifications, and abilities. The WRLC does not discriminate in employment opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, sealed eviction record, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, place of residence or business, status as a victim or family member of a victim of domestic violence, a sexual offense, or stalking, homeless status, or any other characteristic protected by law. This policy governs all aspects of employment, including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, termination, and access to benefits and training.

Any employees with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of their immediate supervisor, department director, Director of Finance and Administration, or the Executive Director. Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of

reprisal. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## **104 Disability Accommodations**

The WRLC is committed to complying fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and ensuring equal opportunity in employment for qualified persons with disabilities. The Consortium prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in regard to all employment practices or terms, conditions and privileges of employment. Consistent with this policy and applicable law, upon an employee's request, the Consortium will make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental impairments of qualified applicants or employees who are able to perform the essential functions of the job, unless the accommodation would cause an undue hardship on the Consortium's business. If you feel that you have a need for an accommodation, please contact the Director, Finance and Administration or the Executive Director, who will seek additional appropriate information in accordance with applicable law.

Employees are responsible for requesting reasonable accommodation and may do so by contacting the Director, Finance and Administration or the Executive Director, who will seek additional appropriate information in accordance with applicable law. The Consortium requires its employees to make any requests for reasonable accommodations in writing and to include relevant information such as:

- A description of the accommodation you are requesting.
- The reason you need an accommodation.
- How the accommodation will help you perform the essential functions of your job.

After receiving your oral or written request, the Consortium will engage in an interactive dialogue with you to determine the precise limitations of your disability and explore potential reasonable accommodations that could overcome those limitations. The Consortium encourages you to suggest specific reasonable accommodations that you believe would allow you to perform your job. However, the Consortium is not required to make the specific accommodation requested by you and may provide an alternative, effective accommodation, to the extent any reasonable accommodation can be made without imposing an undue hardship on the Consortium.

The Consortium may ask for supporting documents from you or a health care provider substantiating a disability that necessitates a reasonable accommodation. Failure to provide requested information may delay accommodations or result in a denial of your request for a reasonable accommodation. The Consortium will keep confidential any medical information obtained in connection with a request for a reasonable accommodation.

The Consortium makes determinations about reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis considering various factors and based on an individualized assessment in each situation. The Consortium strives to make determinations on reasonable accommodation requests expeditiously and will inform the individual once a determination has been made. If you have any questions about a reasonable accommodation request you made, please contact your manager.

Individuals will not be retaliated against for requesting an accommodation in good faith. The Consortium expressly prohibits any form of discipline, reprisal, intimidation, or retaliation against any individual for requesting an accommodation in good faith.

The WRLC is also committed to not discriminating against any qualified employees or applicants because they are related to or associated with a person with a disability. The WRLC will follow any state or local law that provides individuals with disabilities greater protection than the ADA.

This policy is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. The WRLC is committed to taking all other actions necessary to ensure equal employment opportunity for persons with disabilities in accordance with the ADA and all other applicable federal, state, and local laws.

## **105 Pregnancy Accommodations**

The WRLC is committed to complying fully with the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) and ensuring equal opportunity in employment for pregnant employees. WRLC shall provide covered employees with reasonable accommodations to address an employee's known limitations that are related to, affected by, or arise out of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless the accommodation will cause WRLC an undue hardship. Employees are responsible for requesting a reasonable accommodation and may do so by contacting the Director, Finance and Administration or the Executive Director, who will seek additional appropriate information in accordance with applicable law. WRLC shall follow the same process outlined in Section 104 (Disability Accommodations) of this Employee Handbook when evaluating a request for a reasonable accommodation related to pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition.

WRLC shall also comply with state laws regarding breastfeeding and break time to express milk.

## **106 Immigration Law Compliance**

In compliance with federal law, the WRLC is committed to employing only United States citizens and persons who are authorized to work in the United States. The WRLC does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin.

Each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility.

Employees with questions or seeking more information on immigration law issues are encouraged to contact the Director of Finance and Administration.

## **107 Employment of Family Members**

Employment decisions are based on individual merit and job qualifications. The WRLC will consider employment of family members (i.e. persons related by blood, adoption, or marriage or whose relationship with the employee is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage) in different departments; however, individuals may not directly supervise family members or participate in employment, pay, or other decisions concerning a family member that may present a real or perceived conflict of interest. Employees must inform their immediate supervisor, Director, Director of Finance and Administration or the Executive Director of potential or existing situations involving employment of family members.

There may be occasions when temporary, part-time help is required and a family member is available and qualified to perform work for the WRLC. On these occasions, the hiring of family members must be approved by the Executive Director in advance, and appropriate measures shall be put into place to ensure the integrity of the employment arrangement.

## **108 Relocation Expenses**

The WRLC generally does not pay moving and relocation expenses for newly hired individuals. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Executive Director.

## **2. Employment Practices**

### **201 Employment Categories**

**All employees are at-will employees. Employment may be terminated at the will of the employee or the WRLC at any time for any reason not prohibited by law, with or without cause.**

Salary, benefits, and other employment issues are based on an employment category (e.g., full-time, part-time, regular, temporary, exempt, and non-exempt), which is assigned to each employee's job description. An employee's job category is subject to change during the course of their employment but may only be changed with the approval of and written notice from the Executive Director.

#### **Full and Part-time**

Employees are first identified by whether they are full-time or part-time. A full-time employee has a regularly scheduled work week of 35 hours per week.

A part-time employee is scheduled to work less than 35 hours per week. Part-time employees are eligible to receive a prorated portion of vacation and sick leave hours based on the number of hours worked and are eligible for Training and Development opportunities. Part-time employees who work less than 30 hours per week are not eligible for other WRLC benefits.

#### **Regular and Temporary**

Regular employees are individuals hired into a position that is expected to be ongoing.

Temporary employees are usually hired to perform special projects, cover for absent employees, or meet additional workloads for a designated period of time and are not eligible for any WRLC benefits except workers' compensation coverage and any other benefits required by law. Temporary employees work as scheduled by the department supervisor.

#### **Exempt and Non-exempt**

Each position is also classified as exempt or non-exempt as required by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, as amended.



*Exempt Employee:* To be “exempt”, an employee must qualify for an “exempt” category. The most common categories are professional, administrative and executive employees making at least a minimum threshold of pay. Section 13(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides an exemption from both minimum wage and overtime pay for employees in the “exempt” categories.

*Non-Exempt Employee:* Positions that do not qualify as “exempt” are “non exempt” as defined in the FLSA and must therefore be paid at least the minimum wage and overtime for hours over 40 per week. Whether one is salaried or hourly does not affect whether overtime is due. If an employee is “non exempt” and salaried, overtime compensation is due when more than 40 hours per week is worked. Non-exempt employees must obtain permission from their direct supervisors prior to logging overtime hours.

## **202 Employment Documentation**

The WRLC relies upon the accuracy of information supplied by the applicant, as well as the accuracy of other data presented or acquired throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in the exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, termination of employment.

## **203 Employment Reference Checks**

The appropriate WRLC Director, in conjunction with the Director of Finance and Administration, will check employment references, and may perform background checks§, for all potential candidates for positions at the WRLC to help ensure that individuals are well qualified and have a strong potential to be successful.

The Director of Finance and Administration will respond to all employment reference checks and other inquiries from other employers. Responses to such inquiries will confirm only dates of employment, and position(s) held. If individuals wish to have more specific information released from their personnel file regarding employment with the WRLC, a written authorization and release signed by the current or former WRLC employee is required.

## **204 Probationary Period**

All new employees of the WRLC must successfully complete a probationary period lasting three months. The probationary period allows the employee and the WRLC to

determine if the employee is suited for the position. Like all WRLC employees, excluding the Executive Director, during the probationary period, employees may be terminated at the will of the employee or the WRLC at any time for any reason not prohibited by law, with or without cause. The normal probationary period is three months; however, it can be extended to six months at the request of the supervisor.

## **205 Access to Personnel Files**

The WRLC maintains a confidential personnel file on each employee. The personnel file includes such information as the employee's application, resume, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals and salary increases, and other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of the WRLC, and access to the information they contain is restricted. Generally, only supervisors and management personnel of the WRLC who have a legitimate reason to review information in a file are allowed to do so.

Employees who wish to review their own file should contact the Director of Finance and Administration. Employees may review their own personnel files in the presence of the Director of Finance and Administration or other individual appointed by the WRLC.

## **3. Benefit Program**

**Dollar amounts and percentages shown in this and all following sections are correct as of this document's approval on January 1, 2025. As some of these numbers are subject to inflation and other market forces, please confirm current amounts with your supervisor and the Director of Finance and Administration.**

### **301 Employee Benefits**

Employees of the WRLC are eligible for a variety of benefits. Some, such as Social Security, workers' compensation, state disability, and unemployment insurance cover all employees in the manner prescribed by law. Eligibility for other benefits is dependent on a number of factors, including employee classification. Some benefit programs require contributions from employees, but many are fully paid by the WRLC.

### **302 Workers' Compensation Insurance**

Employees are provided with Workers Compensation Insurance at no cost to the employee, which covers any injury incurred during the performance of their job if working from the U.S.. You should report any work-related injury as soon as possible to your supervisor or the Director of Finance & Administration, even if it appears to be minor. This includes work-related injuries that take place in your personal residence, if you are a remote or hybrid employee and sustain a work-related injury during the performance of your job. Failure to report an injury could result in loss of benefits.

Following an eligible workers' compensation claim, employees returning to work must provide proof of rehabilitation or treatment from a licensed physician and verification that they are able to complete all job-related tasks. Once a physician has verified that the employee can resume all job-related tasks, he/she will no longer receive workers' compensation benefits.

### **303 Health and Dental Insurance**

The WRLC's health and dental insurance plans provide employees who work over 30 hours per week and their dependents access to medical and dental insurance benefits from the date of hire. The WRLC pays 80% of the monthly premium for single coverage of the employee, and 65% for employees electing coverage other than single. The remaining 20% and 35% respectively, are the employee's responsibility and may be paid through pre-tax salary reduction. Details of the health insurance plan and costs are described in the Summary Plan Description, which will be provided in

advance of enrollment to eligible employees. Contact the Director of Finance & Administration for more information about health insurance benefits.

WRLC participates in a high deductible health plan and expects to contribute 100% of the participant's deductible, \$1,800 for single and \$3,600 for other than single. WRLC will fund 50% of the deductible on July 1 and the remaining balance will be funded evenly over the next eleven (11) months. Employees hired during the fiscal year will receive a prorated portion of the deductible based on the number of months remaining in the fiscal year. WRLC will fund 50% of the prorated amount in the first month and the remaining balance over the remaining months in the fiscal year.

Details of the health insurance plan and costs are described in the Summary Plan Description, which will be provided in advance of enrollment to eligible employees. Contact the Director of Finance & Administration for more information about health insurance benefits.

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives workers and their families who lose their health benefits the right to choose to continue group health benefits provided by their group health plan for limited periods of time under certain circumstances such as voluntary or involuntary job loss, reduction in the hours worked, transition between jobs, death, divorce, and other life events. Qualified individuals may be required to pay the entire premium for coverage up to 102 percent of the cost to the plan.

See <http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/health-plans/cobra.htm>

At the time of this writing, WRLC has fewer than 20 employees. This has certain implications regarding Medicare. Employees and spouses approaching 65 are advised to speak with a retirement consultant or other financial/insurance expert.

## **304 Life Insurance**

The WRLC provides a fully paid life insurance plan for regular full-time employees with coverage equal to the employee's annual salary (to a maximum of \$100,000), with an additional \$15,000 of life insurance coverage provided after the first 30 days of employment. The plan begins from the date of hire. The life insurance plan also includes Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance coverage.

Details of the life insurance plan, including benefit amounts, are described in the Summary Plan Description provided to eligible employees. Contact the Director of Finance & Administration for more information.

## **305 Short-Term Disability**

Regular full-time employees are eligible for Short-Term Disability coverage from the date of hire, fully paid by the WRLC. If the employee becomes disabled from a non-work-related injury or sickness, disability income benefits are provided as a source of income. You are not eligible to receive short term benefits if you are receiving workers' compensation.

The short-term disability insurance plan begins to pay benefits after a 15-day waiting period; the benefit schedule pays 60% of weekly salary, a maximum of \$1,500 per week, up to 11 weeks. Details of the short-term disability plan, including benefits and conditions, are described in the Summary Plan Description available from the Director of Finance & Administration.

## **306 Long-Term Disability Benefits**

The WRLC provides long-term disability benefits for regular full-time employees. Long-term disability is designed to ensure continuing income for employees medically disabled and unable to work. The plan begins to provide benefits 90 days after the employee becomes disabled. The plan pays 60% of the employee's monthly salary, up to a monthly maximum of \$5,000, continuing to the normal Social Security retirement age. Details of the long-term disability plan, including benefits and conditions, are described in the Summary Plan Description available from the Director of Finance & Administration.

## **307 Retirement Benefits**

The WRLC has established a 403(b) retirement plan with TIAA-CREF to collaboratively invest in your future.

To be eligible to participate in the retirement program, you must complete 6 months of full-time service and be 21 years of age or older.

Each eligible employee is required to make an annual contribution of \$200 or 1% of salary, whichever is less, and may optionally contribute up to 5% of salary. The WRLC makes a minimum contribution of 5% of the employee's salary and also matches whatever the employee contributes, up to a maximum of 5%. For example, an employee contributing the minimum of 1% of their salary would receive an additional contribution from the WRLC of 6%, for a total of 7%. An employee who contributes the maximum of 5% would receive an additional contribution from the WRLC of 10%, for a total of 15% of the employee's salary.

If an employee is ineligible to receive contributions from the WRLC during their first 6 months of employment, the employee may make their own contributions to a TIAA-CREF retirement account.

Because the employee's contribution is automatically deducted from earnings, before federal and state tax withholdings are calculated, the employee saves tax dollars now by having the current taxable amount reduced. While the amounts deducted generally will be taxed when they are finally distributed, favorable tax rules typically apply to 403(b) distributions.

Complete details of the TIAA-CREF retirement plan are described in the Summary Plan Description provided to eligible employees. Contact the Director of Finance & Administration for more information.

## **308 Training and Professional Development**

The WRLC recognizes that the skills and knowledge of its employees are critical to its success. Employees and supervisors are encouraged to identify training and professional development opportunities that will enhance and improve job-related skills, knowledge and understanding.

The WRLC will pay for training and related travel expenses approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. Regular full and part-time employees are eligible. Training that is required by the supervisor will be paid in full. Educational opportunities that would be beneficial, but not required by the supervisor, may be reimbursed at less than 100%.

WRLC employees who are matriculated in an accredited graduate program that is directly relevant to their position responsibilities at WRLC may request tuition support of 50% of tuition up to a maximum of \$1000 per semester. Each employee may receive a maximum of \$2,000 tuition reimbursement per fiscal year. Tuition reimbursement will be processed on a semester-to-semester basis upon successful completion of each course demonstrated by presentation of a transcript or certificate of grades.

Attendance at training and professional development programs is covered by administrative leave and does not count against the employee's vacation. Attendance for graduate coursework is not covered by administrative leave.

## **309 Business Travel**

The WRLC will reimburse employees for reasonable business travel expenses incurred while on assignments away from the normal work location. Approved costs of travel, meals, lodging, taxi, public transportation, tolls and parking directly related to accomplishing business objectives will be reimbursed. Employees are expected to limit expenses to reasonable amounts.

Employees should submit travel expense reports, including receipts for all individual expenses, no later than 30 days after completion of travel or by June 30 of the current fiscal year (whichever is sooner).

Employees are permitted to combine personal travel with business travel, as long as time away from work is approved in advance. Additional expenses arising from non-business travel are the responsibility of the employee.

Abuse of this business travel policy, including falsifying expense reports to reflect costs not incurred by the employee, can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Use of Vehicles for Business Travel**

While on WRLC business, employees using their personal vehicles or vehicles leased or rented by the WRLC are expected to obey traffic laws and to operate the vehicle in a safe manner. Employees who are involved in an accident while traveling on business must promptly report the incident to their supervisor.

Employees who use their personal vehicles for approved business purposes will receive a mileage allowance based on the current IRS standard mileage rates.

### **Local Business Travel**

WRLC employees attending work-related activities in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area will be reimbursed for approved transportation expenses (parking, ride-sharing, mileage, Metrorail passes, etc.).

### **Out of Town Travel**

All business travel outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. Employees should submit a travel request (email is acceptable) as early as possible outlining the destination, dates, purpose, and estimated cost of the out-of-town travel. Travel outside of the United States and Canada requires explicit approval by the Executive Director.

Employees are expected to arrange their own travel and lodging but must submit complete documentation for reimbursement. The WRLC will not be responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for unapproved trips or for changes or cancellations made by the employee due to personal reasons. Employees are to use the most expedient mode of transportation available, to book reasonable fares, and to stay and eat at moderately-priced establishments. The WRLC will reimburse a maximum of \$50 per day for meals.

Abuse of this business travel expenses policy, including falsifying expense reports to reflect costs not incurred by the employee, can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Required Travel**

The WRLC will reimburse, in accordance with WRLC travel policies, all reasonable lodging, transportation, meal, and incidental expenses for required travel.

### **Optional Travel**

The WRLC encourages its employees to participate in professional associations and conferences and will reimburse registration and travel-related expenses with approval by the Executive Director prior to incurring the expense.



## 4. Leave

### 401 Vacation Benefits

The WRLC recognizes the importance of balancing work responsibilities with family and other interests. Employees are granted paid vacation leave, which accrues at various rates depending on length of service. Generally, except in the event of an emergency, employees should schedule vacation leave in advance with their supervisor. Employees are expected to request use of vacation leave in writing at least ten days in advance whenever possible. Managers are expected to approve requests for vacation provided that it does not interfere with the critical and essential work of the department. Vacation leave can be used in minimum increments of one hour and can only be used after it is earned.

Vacation leave is paid at the employee's base pay rate at the time it is taken. Employees taking advantage of flexible scheduling must use the equivalent of hours worked or fraction thereof when charging days of vacation leave. Use of a full day's leave time must correspond to the employee's approved schedule (not including lunch). That is, a full day of annual leave would equal 7 hours for an employee working a 5-day week and 8.75 hours for a 4-day week.

Regular full-time employees are entitled to 140 hours of vacation leave (20 days) each year, accrued monthly at the rate of 11.67 hours.

Regular part-time employees are entitled to 0.05 hours for each hour worked, beginning on the date of hire. No leave is accrued while the part-time employee is using vacation leave.

Unused hours will remain in the employee's vacation leave account until they are used, up to a maximum balance of 245 hours. If the employee's balance reaches the maximum allowed (245 hours), leave accrual will cease until the employee uses paid leave hours and the accrual drops below the limit.

Upon termination of employment, the departing staff member will be paid his or her accrued unused paid leave up to 245 hours. Request for leave after giving notice will be granted at the discretion of the supervisor.

## **402 Holidays**

The WRLC celebrates the following paid holidays for full and part-time employees:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (third Monday in January)
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Juneteenth (June 19th)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (first Monday in September)
- Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday in November)
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve (December 24) through New Years Day (January 1)

A recognized holiday that falls on a Saturday will be observed on the preceding Friday, a holiday that falls on a Sunday will be observed on the following Monday.

Pay for holidays will be calculated based on each employee's normally scheduled pay rate and hours worked. Non-exempt employees who are required by their supervisor to work on a recognized holiday will be paid double their normally scheduled pay rate for the hours worked.

Employees taking advantage of alternative work arrangements will receive seven hours per holiday and will be expected to make up the additional hours taken during the same week or take vacation time to cover the remaining time off. For example, an employee on a 4-day week (8.75 hours per day) would make up 1.75 hours that week.

## **403 Personal Hours**

The WRLC provides full-time employees 14 personal hours per fiscal year upon completion of the probationary period. Personal hours must be taken within each fiscal year and cannot be carried over to the next fiscal year. The employee will not receive compensation for any unused personal hours. Personal hours do not require the advance approval of the employee's supervisor; however, the employee should notify his/her immediate supervisor before the scheduled start of the workday, if possible.

## **404 Medical, Sick & Safe Leave**

The WRLC provides paid medical leave to all eligible employees for periods of temporary absence due to medical conditions, (mental or physical) illnesses, or injuries. Eligible employees may use medical leave for an absence due to (mental or

physical) illness or injury of the employee, spouse, parents, and/or children. Medical leave may also be used for doctor's appointments of the employee, spouse, parents, and/or children if the employee's presence is required. Additional information about qualifying leave can be found at <https://labor.maryland.gov/paidleave/paidleaveposter.shtml> .

Medical leave begins to accrue at the time of hire. Unused medical leave will not be paid to employees while they are employed or upon termination. Regular full-time employees will accrue medical leave at the rate of 7 hours per month up to a maximum accumulation of 630 hours (90 days). Regular part-time employees will accrue medical leave at the rate of 1 hour for every 20 hours worked with the maximum accumulation prorated on the same basis. When an employee receives medical/family leave of absence (MUFMLA), or short-term or long-term disability, he/she does not continue to earn additional sick leave during the period of such leave.

Paid medical leave can be used in minimum increments of one hour. Employees taking advantage of flexible scheduling must use the equivalent of their regularly scheduled work day when charging medical leave. For example, for the 4-day week schedule, employees must charge 8.75 hours per day.

Employees who are unable to report to work due to medical condition, illness or injury should notify their immediate supervisor before the scheduled start of their workday, if possible. If an employee is absent for three consecutive days or more due to illness or injury, a physician's statement may be required to verify the disability and its beginning and expected ending dates and may be required as a condition to receiving medical leave benefits. Before returning to work from a medical leave absence of 10 calendar days or more, an employee may also be required to provide a physician's verification that he or she may safely return to work.

Employees on extended medical leave must apply to the Director of Finance and Administration for any other available compensation and benefits, such as workers' compensation, short-term or long-term disability. Medical leave benefits may also be used to supplement any payments that an employee is eligible to receive from state disability insurance, workers' compensation or WRLC-provided disability insurance programs. The combination of any such disability payments and medical leave benefits cannot exceed the employee's normal base pay earnings.

Paid medical leave will be approved only up to the amount of medical leave hours the employee has accrued. Approved absence in excess of available leave will be treated as leave without pay.

## 405 Family and Medical Leave

Though the WRLC does not meet the minimum employee threshold outlined in the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (at least 50 employees employed by the employer within 75 miles), the WRLC chooses to provide family and medical leave to eligible employees according to the FMLA. To be eligible for FMLA benefits, an employee must:

- have worked for the WRLC for a total of 12 months and
- have worked at least 1250 hours over the previous 12 months.

All family and medical leave (federal, state, or local) is unpaid, although an employee may substitute paid leave, may apply for short- and/or long-term disability benefits, or may be eligible for worker's compensation benefits for some or all of Family and Medical Leave. An employee's use of any paid leave or disability benefits is counted against an entitlement for the applicable 12- or 24- month period.

Employees foreseeing the need to use family and medical leave should give their immediate supervisor and Director written notice at least 30 days prior to the start date of the requested leave. In the event that the need for family and medical leave is not foreseeable, the employee must notify his or her supervisor as soon as possible. Satisfactory medical certification must be provided to the WRLC as requested in a timely manner.

During an approved family and medical leave, the employee's health insurance and other insurance benefits may be maintained. The employee must contact the Director of Finance and Administration to make arrangements to continue benefits and pay appropriate premiums while on leave.

WRLC shall provide eligible employees up to a total of 12 workweeks of combined family and medical leave during any 12-month period when leave is taken for one or more of the following reasons:

- The birth of a child of an employee, and care for the child. (Entitlement expires 12 months after birth.)
- The placement of a child with an employee for adoption or foster care. (Entitlement expires 12 months after placement.)
- To care for the spouse, child, or parent of an employee if the family member has a serious health condition.
- The employee's own serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his or her position.

## **406 Court and Jury Duty Leave**

WRLC grants paid administrative leave to full and part-time employees when they are summoned to serve jury duty or appear in court as a witness in a civil or criminal proceeding. Employees should promptly notify their supervisors after receiving a summons for jury duty or court appearance and provide a copy of the notification.

Leave for jury duty is granted only for days the employee is regularly scheduled to work. Employees are expected to report for work whenever the court schedule permits.

Employees who are summoned to appear in court for other reasons may use paid leave or unpaid leave.

## **407 Time Off to Vote**

The WRLC will grant up to 2 hours of paid time off on election days. Employees should inform their supervisors to arrange for the time off to vote.

## **408 Bereavement Leave**

The WRLC grants paid bereavement leave to eligible full and part-time employees when a death occurs in an employee's immediate family. Employees will be granted up to three business days of bereavement leave to make arrangements necessitated by the death of an immediate family member, or to attend the funeral of an immediate family member. Employees shall be entitled to ten days of bereavement leave without loss of pay, leave, or service credit when the employee suffers a stillbirth or the employee's child under the age of 21 years.

The WRLC defines "immediate family" as the employee's spouse, parent, child, grandparents or grandchildren, sibling, or child's spouse; the employee's spouse's parent, child, or sibling. Special consideration will also be given to any other person whose association with the employee was similar to any of the above relationships. To use bereavement leave, the employee must promptly notify his or her supervisor in order to arrange for adequate job coverage during the leave period.

The WRLC also allows eligible employees to use paid vacation leave or unpaid leave to attend observances or conduct personal business related to the death of friends or other family members who are not immediate family.

## **409 Unpaid Leave of Absence**

Employees who have been employed by the WRLC for at least 12 months are eligible to request an unpaid leave of absence. Unpaid leaves are granted at the discretion of the employee's supervisor or Director and must be approved by the Executive Director. Generally, leaves of absence for personal reasons may be granted for seven to 60 calendar days. Employees taking leaves of absence must contact the Director of Finance and Administration to make arrangements to continue benefits while on leave. Requests for unpaid leave that qualifies under the Family and Medical Leave Act will be governed by the terms of that policy.

## **410 Military Leave**

Regular full and part-time WRLC employees whose military obligations interrupt or interfere with their employment have certain job protection provided by the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. The Act protects members of National Guard units, reservists, inductees and enlistees into the Armed Forces who volunteer for or are ordered to active duty for the Federal government.

Employees called to active duty must notify their immediate supervisor and the Director of Finance and Administration in writing of their departure and provide a copy of official military orders when they become available.

Active duty will be treated as leave of absence without pay. Such leave may not exceed five years in duration. During the approved unpaid leave of absence, an employee called to active duty may continue to have health insurance, long-term disability insurance and life insurance if he or she pays the full cost of the benefit. While the employee is on unpaid leave, the WRLC will not contribute to the premiums. If an employee called to active duty wishes to continue his or her health insurance, life insurance or long-term disability insurance, the employee must make payment arrangements with the Director of Finance and Administration at the start of his or her leave of absence. Employees returning from active military duty are entitled to the then available benefits upon re-employment.

Upon re-employment following a call up to active duty, employees who were participants in the WRLC's retirement plan at the time they were called for active duty, will be considered as not having a break in service for purposes of the retirement plan. In addition, upon re-employment, the WRLC will make any plan contributions that it would have made if the employee had not been on a leave of absence for active military service. However, the WRLC will contribute no interest or earnings to the employee's retirement account. Plan participants returning to employment are also provided an opportunity under federal law to make certain retroactive voluntary

contributions that they could have made had they not been on military leave, and the WRLC will match such contributions consistent with the retirement plan.

Regular employees called to active duty who are released from active duty with an honorable discharge are entitled to be restored to their former positions or to positions of like seniority, status and pay on the same terms and conditions as if their employment had not been interrupted.

Employees called to active duty who, upon release, have a service-related disability, making them no longer qualified, with reasonable accommodations, to perform the duties of the position and for whom job restructuring is not feasible, who, nevertheless, are qualified with reasonable accommodations for an alternative position, will be offered the alternative position. If an employee called to active duty requests reemployment in an alternative position, he or she must be employed in a position that provides seniority, status and pay, as similar as possible to the former position.

Employees ordered to active duty for more than ninety (90) days must apply for re-employment within ninety (90) days of their release from active duty. Employees ordered to active duty for ninety (90) days or less must apply for reemployment within thirty-one (31) days of their release from active duty.

## **5. Compensation and Pay Practices**

### **501 Paydays**

Employees are paid every two weeks. The pay period starts on a Wednesday, ends two weeks later on a Tuesday, and is paid the following Friday. Approved leave reports should be forwarded to the Director of Finance & Administration as soon as reasonably possible. Employees are encouraged to use direct deposit. See the Director of Finance and Administration for instructions on how to enroll.

### **502 Pay Deductions**

It is the policy of the WRLC to comply with applicable laws with respect to the payment of wages and benefits to employees, including the Fair Labor Standards Act, as amended, applicable federal, state, and local income taxes, and Social Security taxes. The WRLC will not make pay deductions that violate either federal or state law.

Employees must approve personal deductions by submitting the authorized forms to the Director of Finance and Administration. If an employee believes that the WRLC has made an improper deduction, the employee should notify the Director of Finance and Administration.

### **503 Salary Increases**

Funding for salary increases is determined by the WRLC Board of Directors each year and is distributed to individual WRLC staff at the discretion of the Executive Director. Salary increases will vary from person to person and from year to year.

Individuals who begin their employment at the WRLC after March 31 of any given year will not normally be considered for a salary increase until the second July after their date of hire. Staff beginning work at the WRLC between January 1 and March 31 of any given year may be given a prorated increase in the first July after their date of hire.

Under special circumstances staff may be considered for a salary increase at other times. Recommendation for a special salary increase must come from the employee's supervisor, and must be approved by the department director and the Executive Director.



## **504 Pay Advances**

In the event of a personal emergency, employees may submit a written request for a pay advance to the appropriate Director indicating the nature of the emergency. The final decision is at the discretion of the Executive Director.

An advance will be made under the following conditions:

- Will not exceed the employee's next scheduled bi-weekly net pay
- The full advanced amount will be deducted from the next scheduled bi-weekly pay
- The employee must have 50% of the advance in equivalent dollar value of accrued vacation.

## **6. Work Conditions**

### **601 Safety**

Safety must be every employee's concern.

It is the responsibility of the WRLC to provide the necessary training, guidance and communication to allow all employees to safely fulfill their position responsibilities. It is the responsibility of each employee to follow approved safety guidelines, participate in required training programs, abide by any laws or regulations, and to exercise appropriate caution in all work activities. Employees are expected to immediately report any unsafe condition to an available supervisor.

Employees who violate safety standards, who cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or who fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

In the case of accidents that result in injury, regardless of how insignificant the injury may appear, employees should immediately notify the Director of Finance and Administration and the appropriate supervisor. Such reports are necessary to comply with laws and to initiate insurance and workers' compensation benefits procedures.

When on WRLC business away from the WRLC facility, employees are expected to abide by all federal, state and local laws and regulations.

### **602 Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited throughout the workplace.

Receptacles are located near the garage and break room exits of the building for those who wish to smoke outside the building. Employees may only smoke in these two areas and are expected to use the receptacles for disposal of smoking material.

This policy applies equally to all employees, customers, and visitors.

### **603 Adverse Weather Conditions**

In the event of adverse weather conditions, the WRLC does not want to endanger those employees who must work at the WRLC site. Employees who are required to work on site will be given leave on these occasions. The decision to close for those employees who must work on site is at the discretion of the Director of Library and

User Services and SCF Supervisor based on weather closures/delays at the partner institutions. Notification of closures/schedule changes will be sent to WRLC Alert and WRLC Staff email lists.

All other employees are expected to be prepared to work from home if adverse weather is in the forecast.

Leave will be granted as follows:

- If the WRLC is open, all scheduled staff members are expected to work their regular hours.
- If there is a closure or delay in opening, the Director of Library and User Services will contact the SCF Supervisor by 6:00 AM so that SCF staff and the courier drivers can be notified.
- If the WRLC facility is closed due to adverse weather conditions, employees who must work on site are not expected to work and are not charged for time off. Employees who are able to work remotely are expected to do so. Employees who choose not to work remotely when the WRLC facility is closed due to adverse weather conditions may take unpaid leave, vacation time or personal leave if available.

If the Executive Director announces that WRLC will close early during normal business hours, employees will not be charged for time off.

## **604 Workplace Violence Prevention**

The WRLC is committed to creating and maintaining a safe workplace.

All employees, including supervisors and temporary employees, will be treated with courtesy and respect at all times.

All threats of, or actual violence, should be reported as soon as possible to your immediate supervisor, Director or the Executive Director. If an employee feels they are in immediate danger, call 911. Anyone determined to be responsible for threats of, or actual violence will be subject to prompt disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Firearms, weapons, and other dangerous or hazardous devices or substances are always prohibited from the premises of WRLC.

# **7. Work Hours**

## **701 Work Schedules**

The standard work week is 35 hours. An unpaid 30-minute meal period is expected to be included when defining the work schedules (i.e., the starting and ending times must result in 7.5 hours per day for a five-day work week.)

Normal work days and shifts for positions within each department will be established by the supervising Director. Employees will be informed about the expected work day when they are hired, however, hours may be changed as required by the WRLC at any time.

The WRLC supports alternate work arrangements for staff whose responsibilities can be accomplished outside of the WRLC office and/or outside a traditional work schedule, so long as the WRLC's work requirements can be met effectively. The responsible Director must justify these work arrangements. Participation in alternate work arrangements is a privilege and not a right, and will only be granted to eligible employees in eligible positions. See Policy 703 for details.

## **702 Overtime**

When operating requirements or other needs cannot be met during regular working hours, non-exempt employees may be required to work overtime. The WRLC complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) and other applicable laws when calculating and paying overtime to employees. Supervisors must approve all overtime by non-exempt employees before the hours are worked. Exempt employees may be asked to work beyond the normal work week but are not entitled to overtime pay or compensatory time off.

Overtime compensation is paid to all non-exempt employees in accordance with federal and state wage and hour restrictions. Overtime is paid for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in one workweek. Overtime pay is calculated at a rate of 150% of the employee's regular rate of pay for actual hours worked and does not include time off for medical leave, vacation leave, or any leave of absence.

Exempt, technical positions may require on-call availability during nights and weekends. Exempt employees are not paid or awarded compensatory time for on-call status or on-call work.

## **703 Alternative Work Arrangements**

The WRLC supports alternate work arrangements for staff whose responsibilities can be accomplished outside of the WRLC office and/or outside a traditional work schedule, so long as work requirements can be met effectively.

These arrangements can be either temporary or ongoing, and are subject to change as business needs change. Participation in alternate work arrangements is a privilege and not a right, and will only be granted to eligible employees in eligible positions as defined below. All requests for, or changes to, alternative work arrangements must be approved annually by the employee's Director and by the Executive Director.

This policy applies only to formal, regularly-scheduled alternate work arrangements. It is understood that there will be times when any employee may need to adjust his/her work schedule (with Director approval) on any given day because of unexpected events, or when an employee may be asked to work an alternative schedule for a short period of time related to a particular project or problem. These minor variations do not need to be recorded as a new alternative schedule.

Non-exempt staff are subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act and other federal and state wage and hour laws. Non-exempt staff must be paid time and one-half for any hours in excess of 40 worked in the employee's work week, and time cannot be banked during one week to compensate for time off in a future work week. Flexible scheduling for nonexempt staff that would cause overtime to occur will not be approved without written permission of the executive director.

To promote easy interaction among staff and to ensure employee safety, regularly-scheduled working hours should take place Monday through Friday, 6:00 am to 7:00 pm Eastern, whether the employee works a standard 5-day week or a variant schedule, or whether the employee is on-site or working remotely. A work schedule outside these core hours must be approved by the Executive Director.

The two most common examples of alternative work arrangements are:

- Flexible scheduling
- Remote work

### **Flexible Scheduling**

Flexible scheduling refers to a variation in the standard 5-day 35-hour week. WRLC allows eligible employees to work alternative schedules, the most common being a

4-day week. All flexible scheduling must be approved by the Executive Director on an annual basis.

Note: All employees must include 30 minutes for lunch when defining their work schedules. That is, the starting and ending times must result in daily hours equal to:

- 7.5 hours per day for a 5-day week
- 9.25 hours per day for a 4-day week

Use of a full day's leave time must correspond to the employee's approved schedule (not including lunch). That is, a full day of annual leave would equal 7 hours for a 5-day week and 8.75 hours for a 4-day week.

### **Remote and Hybrid Work**

Remote (or hybrid) work is a work arrangement in which an employee regularly performs (some) officially assigned duties at home or at another work site outside of the traditional on-site work environment. Working remotely works well for some employees but does not work well for others. At all times, it shall remain within WRLC's discretion to permit remote work, change an existing arrangement, or deny a remote work opportunity. Such decisions may be based on things like a remote employee's performance, the suitability of the remote employee's work environment, evolving laws in the remote employee's home state, or other factors both within and outside of WRLC's and/or the remote employee's control.

Because laws vary from state to state, employees must inform WRLC of their intended remote work location and must receive prior written approval from their direct supervisor to work remotely from that jurisdiction. Further, if a remote employee intends to move from one state to another state, the employee must again obtain prior written approval from their direct supervisor to work remotely from the new state. Upon receiving a remote work request, WRLC will again evaluate whether a remote work arrangement is feasible and either grant or deny the employee's request.

An employee participating in a remote work arrangement is responsible for fully performing his/her job duties and to achieve the same high level of productivity that is expected at the office.

Remote work schedules for one or more employees should not create additional work for other employees. These requests will not be approved in cases where the remote work would increase the burden on on-site staff.

Should on-site meetings be requested, the remote employees are expected to attend in person.

## **Eligibility**

All employees seeking approval for alternative work arrangements must meet the following criteria:

- The employee has demonstrated self-motivation, independence, and dependability in accomplishing work assignments.
- The employee's overall performance evaluations are "good solid performer" or higher.
- The employee has clearly defined performance standards.
- The employee has satisfied offsite workstation requirements, including availability of necessary equipment and ability to maintain security and confidentiality of data and intellectual property.

In addition, the employee's position must meet the following criteria:

- Face-to-face contact with co-workers and customers is predictable and contact can be managed through telephone, video, or email communication during periods when the employee is not on-site.
- Performance can be judged either through quality and timeliness of assignments or quantity of tasks completed or a combination of these factors.

New employees may request an alternative work arrangement after the probationary period, assuming their probationary performance appraisal is evaluated "good solid performer" or higher. New employees that accept a position having negotiated an alternative work arrangement as a condition of accepting the position are eligible immediately.

Positions not eligible for certain alternate work arrangements are those in which:

- The position requires handling material or equipment which cannot be taken offsite (i.e. shared collection operations), or
- The position requires that the employee be available daily for face-to-face communication on an unpredictable as-needed basis by other WRLC staff or clients.

# 8. Employee Responsibility

## 801 Employee Conduct and Work Rules

### Professional Conduct

The Washington Research Library Consortium expects its employees to behave in a professional, business-like manner at work, on WRLC premises, and whenever representing the WRLC.

The WRLC's standards of conduct include, but are not limited to the following:

- Employees should report to work on time.
- Employees are expected to dress appropriately for their position whenever working or representing the WRLC. Employees who ride or operate heavy machinery must dress according to all OSHA guidelines.
- Unauthorized use of WRLC resources, such as telephones, copiers, computers, fax machines, postage, courier services, office supplies, and other business equipment and supplies is prohibited. The WRLC recognizes that its employees may occasionally need to use WRLC-provided electronic resources for personal matters and does not wish to prohibit such use altogether. The overriding principle that should govern personal use of these resources is that reasonable and incidental unofficial use of WRLC electronic resources is authorized only so long as (i) the WRLC incurs no additional cost from that use, other than the minimal cost incurred from ordinary wear and tear and the use of minimal amounts of ink, toner, or paper; and (ii) the use does not inappropriately interfere with official business.
- Theft, unauthorized removal, negligence or misuse of WRLC property or property of WRLC colleagues is prohibited.
- During the course of their work hours, WRLC employees should only conduct duties related to their jobs at the WRLC. Employees should not conduct personal business during work hours or use WRLC resources for personal business.
- Unauthorized use, possession, or storage of firearms, dangerous weapons, explosives or lethal materials on WRLC premises or at WRLC-sponsored activities is prohibited, whether or not a federal or local license to possess the weapon or material has been issued.
- Employees are expected to inform their supervisor of any visitors to the WRLC prior to the visitors' arrival.
- Fighting, threatening violence, insubordination or other disrespectful conduct is not permitted.



## **Conflicts of Interest**

All employees must avoid actions that are or could be perceived as a conflict of interest between their personal, financial, or professional interests and the interests of the WRLC. A conflict of interest may occur if an employee or a member of the employee's immediate family or household:

- has an existing or potential interest, financial or non-financial, that may impair or appear to impair the individual's independent judgment when performing WRLC responsibilities; or
- receives or may receive a material, financial, or other benefit from knowledge of confidential or proprietary information regarding the WRLC.

Employees who believe they are involved in a matter or activity in which a conflict of interest may exist should promptly and fully discuss the situation with their Director. The individual must refrain from further participation in the matter until the question is resolved and follow any directions given by the WRLC concerning the matter.

## **Felony or Misdemeanor Convictions**

If an employee is convicted of a felony or misdemeanor while employed by the WRLC, the employee must notify his or her Director immediately following the conviction. The WRLC may terminate the employee as a result of the conviction or for failure to provide notice of the conviction.

## **Subpoenas**

Subpoenas and any other request or demand for the release of information for a legal proceeding must be referred to the WRLC's Executive Director. No information is to be released without the approval of the Executive Director.

## **802 Personnel Data Changes**

To ensure accurate and current information on each employee and their dependents it is essential that employees promptly notify the Director of Finance and Administration of any changes related to your personnel information. Examples include:

- Mailing address
- Telephone number(s)
- Dependent's names
- Individuals to contact in the event of an emergency

## **803 Drug and Alcohol Use**

It is the WRLC's desire to provide a drug-free, healthy, and safe workplace. To promote this goal, employees are required to report to work in appropriate mental and physical condition to perform their jobs in a satisfactory manner.

While on the WRLC premises and while conducting business-related activities off WRLC premises, no employee may use, possess, distribute, sell, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. The legal use of prescribed drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair an employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the job effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger other individuals in the workplace.

Under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, an employee who performs work for a government contract or grant must notify WRLC of a criminal conviction for drug-related activity occurring in the workplace. The report must be made within five days of the conviction.

Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment, and/or required participation in a substance abuse rehabilitation or treatment program. Such violations may also have legal consequences.

Employees with questions on this policy or issues related to drug or alcohol use in the workplace should raise their concerns with their supervisor or the Director of Finance and Administration without fear of reprisal.

## **804 Attendance and Punctuality**

Employees should report to work on time and sufficiently prepared for the workday. In those infrequent instances when employees cannot avoid being late to work or are unable to work as scheduled, they should notify their supervisor as soon as possible in advance of the anticipated tardiness or absence.

Frequent or unscheduled absences and repeated lateness may result in disciplinary action. Employees who are absent from work for three or more consecutive days without calling to report the absence may be terminated from employment based on job abandonment.

## **805 Use of Equipment**

Equipment is made available to WRLC employees so that we can accomplish our mission of providing proactive and responsive, innovative, cost-effective access to shared information resources, services and expertise. When using these assets, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance, and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines. If any equipment, machines, or tools appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair, please inform your supervisor promptly to prevent deterioration of the equipment and possible injury to employees or others.

Employees will be expected to reimburse the WRLC for any expenses resulting from personal use of WRLC equipment and supplies (including long-distance or mobile telephone service, printing and copying, etc.) that go beyond incidental use.

The WRLC allows the use of company postage, and shipping and delivery services on a full reimbursement basis. All postage used for personal mail should be recorded on the log form located in the supply room. When completing UPS, Postal or FedEx air bills, indicate "personal" in the reference area. The accounting staff will periodically prepare an invoice and distribute to each employee. Payment is due upon receipt.

## **807 Business Ethics and Conduct**

The WRLC will comply with all applicable laws and regulations and expects its directors, managers, supervisors, and employees to conduct business in accordance with the letter, spirit, and intent of all relevant laws and to refrain from any illegal, violent, dishonest, or unethical conduct.

If a situation arises where it is difficult to determine the proper course of action, the matter should be discussed with your immediate supervisor, department director, Director of Finance and Administration or the Executive Director.

If any employee reasonably believes that some policy, practice, or activity of The Washington Research Library Consortium ("WRLC") is illegal or dishonest, a written complaint must be filed by that employee with the person(s) listed in the Whistleblower policy. An employee filing the written complaint is known as a "whistleblower" and is protected from retaliation. See the Whistleblower Policy.

Compliance with this policy of business ethics and conduct is the responsibility of every WRLC employee.

## **808 Confidentiality of information**

Certain information maintained by the WRLC is confidential and subject to specific state and federal laws and regulations. All confidential information must be protected against unauthorized access and disclosure. Unauthorized access and/or disclosure of confidential information by WRLC employees is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action and legal penalties.

### **Safeguarding patron data**

Various applications maintained by the WRLC on behalf of the partner universities contain personal data (e.g., ID numbers, addresses, phone numbers, materials requested or borrowed, electronic databases used, websites visited). Patron information must be held as CONFIDENTIAL.

To safeguard patron information and to comply with federal law (notably the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)), no WRLC staff member may disclose any information concerning a patron (student, faculty or staff of our partner universities or any other user of WRLC resources) except with the approval and under the direction of WRLC's Executive Director.

Patron information may be disclosed only:

- When requested by authorized staff of participating WRLC universities performing their essential job functions
- Upon written consent of the patron
- Pursuant to court order or where otherwise required by law.

In addition, WRLC staff may not access or use personal patron data for any purpose unrelated to providing contracted services to the participating universities. WRLC staff will take all reasonable steps to ensure that confidential patron information in electronic and paper records is not made visible to unauthorized persons. This includes the use of artificial intelligence and other large data analysis models provided by vendors or other entities outside of the 9 consortial partners.

Violation of this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

Responding to requests for patron data from external organizations

The WRLC may receive requests for patron information from external organizations including departments of the participating WRLC universities, vendors, other private parties, or law enforcement agencies. In every case, regardless of the source or

nature of the request, the WRLC staff member who receives the request must contact and get authorization to proceed from the Executive Director . Refer to the appropriate section below if you receive a request for patron information.

### **Request from an office at a partner university other than the library**

The WRLC director notified about the request for patron information will contact the Library Director of the patron's home university. WRLC will release the requested information only to the Library Director or their designee.

### **Law Enforcement Official**

If a Law Enforcement Official informally requests patron information, DO NOT PROVIDE IT. Ask to see official identification, and then contact the Executive Director or the Director, Finance and Administration. If the agent or officer does not have a court order, the WRLC director will inform him/her that patron records cannot be provided without a proper court order in good form. Without a court order, neither the FBI nor local law enforcement has authority to compel cooperation with an investigation or require answers to questions, other than the name and address of the person speaking to the agent or officer.

If a Law Enforcement Official presents a subpoena, a court order, or other legal document, ask to see official identification and contact the Executive Director or the Director, Finance and Administration. The WRLC director will immediately refer the court order to legal counsel for review. There are two kinds of court orders which might be presented:

- a subpoena, which allows WRLC a period of time to respond to and contest the court's order
- a search warrant, which can be executed immediately. An agent or officer serving a search warrant can begin the search as soon as the warrant is served. Staff should "step aside" but are entitled to consult with legal counsel and to ask that legal counsel be present during the search.

If the court order is a search warrant issued under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) (USA Patriot Act amendment), special conditions apply. A search warrant issued by a FISA court contains a "gag order" which means that no person or institution served with the warrant can disclose that the warrant has been served or that records have been produced pursuant to the warrant. WRLC staff must comply with this order. No information can be disclosed to any other party, including the patron whose records are the subject of the search warrant. WRLC staff should notify the WRLC's designated administrator(s) that an officer or agent has presented a search warrant, but should not indicate the nature of the search warrant. The gag

order does not change the WRLC’s right to legal representation during the search. The WRLC can still seek legal advice concerning the warrant and request that legal counsel be present during the actual search and execution of the warrant.

## **809 Whistleblower Policy**

If any employee reasonably believes that some policy, practice, or activity of The Washington Research Library Consortium (“WRLC”) is illegal or dishonest, a written complaint must be filed by that employee with the person(s) identified below under this policy. It is the intent of the “WRLC” to adhere to all laws and regulations that apply to the organization and the underlying purpose of this policy is to support the organization’s goal of legal compliance. The support of all employees is necessary to achieving this goal. An employee filing the written complaint is known as a “whistleblower” and is protected from retaliation only if the employee brings the alleged unlawful activity, policy, or practice to the attention of the “WRLC” in good faith and provides the “WRLC” with a reasonable opportunity to investigate and correct the alleged unlawful activity. The protection described below is only available to employees that comply with this requirement.

The whistleblower is not responsible for investigating the activity or for determining fault or corrective measures; appropriate management officials are charged with these responsibilities.

Such activity may include another employee or outside persons or firms doing business with WRLC. Examples of illegal or dishonest activities are violations of federal, state or local laws, fraudulent financial reporting and other inappropriate actions.

### **Employee Reporting Process**

If an employee has knowledge of or concern of illegal or dishonest activity, the employee may communicate with any of the following:

- His/her immediate supervisor
- Director of Finance and Administration
- Executive Director

Any violation involving a member of senior staff should be reported to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Communications may be verbal, but a written communication would be preferred. No particular format is necessary. Communications should include all information necessary to properly and completely evaluate the complaint or charge. This includes

material evidence, names of persons able to corroborate the accusation and how to contact the complainant to assure anonymity, if anonymity is desired. (Note: Anonymity may hinder the ability to investigate the matter in a timely and effective manner).

### **Role of the Executive Director**

All reports of illegal and dishonest activities will be promptly submitted to the Executive Director, who is responsible for overseeing the investigation and coordinating corrective actions. The Executive Director will determine the level of investigation the complaint warrants and who the appropriate party is to perform the investigation. The Executive Director is responsible for determining if the facts support or do not support the complaint. In either case, the Executive Director will notify the employee who made the complaint of the decision and the reason thereof.

The Executive Director in his/her discretion may report to the WRLC's general counsel complaints received under this policy, their status and resolution. The Executive Director is required to report quarterly to the Audit Committee a summary of complaints, if any are received under this policy, their status, resolution and the WRLC's compliance with this policy.

For violations involving a member of senior staff, the Chair of the Board of Directors will fill the role of the Executive Director and perform the responsibilities identified in the preceding paragraphs.

### **Employee Responsibility**

An employee who reports a complaint or charge must exercise sound judgment and act without malice to avoid baseless allegations or frivolous complaints.

### **Employee Protection**

Whistleblower protections are provided in two important areas – confidentiality and against adverse action in the form of retaliation.

Insofar as is reasonably possible, the confidentiality of the whistleblower will be maintained. However, at the discretion of the Executive Director or the Chair of the Board of Directors, after consultation with general counsel, the whistleblower's identity may have to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation or to comply with the law.

The WRLC will not take adverse action against a whistleblower solely as a consequence of his/her acting as a whistleblower. This includes, but is not limited to,

protection from employment action such as termination, compensation decreases, poor work assignments and threats of physical harm. Any whistleblower that believes he/she is being retaliated against should immediately contact the Executive Director or the Chair of the Board of Directors, if appropriate.

Any employee, however, who knowingly files a false or materially misleading report of wrongdoing, is subject to discipline.

## **Questions**

Employees with questions regarding this policy should contact the Director of Finance and Administration.

## **810 Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment**

It is the policy of the WRLC to prohibit harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, sealed eviction record, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, place of residence or business, status as a victim or family member of a victim of domestic violence, a sexual offense, or stalking, homeless status, or any other characteristic protected by law (collectively “protected classifications”). Harassment is strictly prohibited whether taking place in person at a physical work location or event or carried out through digital communication platforms like email, chat, video calls, or social media.

### **Sexual Harassment**

For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or advancement; or
- submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for making an employment decision affecting an individual; or
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
- sexual harassment may occur between persons of the same or opposite gender.



Although sexual harassment often occurs when one person takes advantage of a position of authority over another, the WRLC recognizes that sexual harassment may also occur between people of equivalent status. Regardless of the form it may take, the WRLC will not tolerate conduct of a sexual nature that creates an unacceptable working environment.

### **Harassment Other Than Sexual Harassment**

Harassment, other than sexual harassment, is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion to an individual because of a protected classification, when such conduct has the purpose or effect of:

- unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance;
- creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment;
- or otherwise adversely affecting an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to: verbal abuse or ridicule, including slurs, epithets, and stereotyping; offensive jokes and comments; threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts, and displaying or distributing offensive materials, writings, graffiti, or pictures.

### **National Origin and Accent Harassment**

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has taken the position that harassment of employees on the basis of their national origin or their accent or manner of speaking is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended. Under EEOC guidelines, ethnic slurs and other verbal or physical conduct relating to an employee's national origin, surname, skin color or accent would constitute unlawful harassment when such conduct:

- has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment,
- has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the employee's work performance,
- or has the purpose or effect of adversely affecting his or her employment opportunities.

### **Procedure for Complaints**

Any employee of the WRLC who believes that conduct that violates this policy has occurred, or who has questions concerning this policy, is encouraged to contact the Director of Finance and Administration.

In addition, the WRLC recognizes that supervisors bear a particularly important responsibility to deter harassment. Supervisors who learn of conduct that may violate this policy should immediately contact the Director of Finance and Administration, and, as appropriate, inform their own supervisors.

In accordance with the guidelines of the EEOC, all complaints will be investigated impartially, and appropriate corrective action will be taken, including discipline for inappropriate conduct. Complaints will be handled confidentially, except as necessary for investigation and resolution.

This policy prohibits retaliation, harassment, or other adverse action against an individual for making a complaint, assisting in an investigation, opposing harassment or otherwise exercising rights protected by law. It further prohibits taking any adverse employment related action against an individual based on an unsubstantiated allegation or rumor of harassment.

## **812 Outside Employment and Consulting**

Employees may engage in consulting or outside employment activities with the express written approval of their supervisor and the Executive Director, and as long as the activities do not interfere with their WRLC responsibilities and duties, or result in a potential conflict of interest, or unfair competitive situation for the WRLC.

If the WRLC determines that an employee's outside work interferes with performance or the ability to meet the requirements of the WRLC, the employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment if he or she wishes to remain with the WRLC.

Employees must not use WRLC resources to support such outside employment or consulting.

## 9. Employee Relations

### 901 Performance Appraisals

Employees and supervisors should communicate regularly throughout the year about the employee's responsibilities, projects and performance. Formal written performance evaluations for all employees are conducted at least annually (mid-year reviews are recommended) using the WRLC Performance Feedback forms available from the Director of Finance and Administration. Between scheduled appraisals, supervisors should discuss with employees any performance concerns that require attention, and should keep written records of any significant incidents.

The performance appraisal process is essential to ensuring that each of us is focused on priorities that will result in the success of the WRLC. During the annual performance evaluation meeting, the supervisor and employee discuss the employee's performance over the past year. The supervisor and the employee each offer reviews of the employee's contributions to the department's goals and to WRLC's vision/mission. The appraisal will include the supervisor's assessment of the employee's attainment of previously set objectives, recommendations for growth, and performance goals for the next evaluation period. The completed evaluation becomes part of the employee's personnel record.

With newly hired employees, appraisals will be completed after the probationary period (employee's first three months of employment for a new hire), and after the employee's first three months in a new position resulting from a transfer or promotion.

### 902 Disciplinary Actions and Dismissal

**This Section 902 describes WRLC's general philosophy on employee discipline. At all times, WRLC employees remain at-will, and WRLC may terminate the employment arrangement for any lawful reason, or for no reason, regardless of the severity of any alleged infraction.**

The WRLC sets expectations for employees regarding job performance, time and attendance, and conduct. Employees are responsible for meeting these expectations and must understand that failure to meet expectations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## **903 Problem Resolutions**

### **Dispute Resolution Procedure**

The WRLC encourages open and constructive communication. When an employee cannot resolve job-related problems or when they feel unfairly treated, they should first seek assistance from their supervisor who is responsible for making a good faith effort to air differences and to find resolutions to problems. If these efforts are not successful, an employee is entitled to communicate the problem to the next level of management; the appropriate Director or the Executive Director.

An employee can proceed without fear of prejudice or reprisal and with full assurance that their confidence will be respected.

This procedure is available to all permanent part-time and full-time employees.

# 10. Termination of Employment

## 1001 Employment Termination

Employment with the WRLC is based on mutual consent; both the employee and WRLC have the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause, at any time. The most common reasons for employment termination are:

- Resignation - voluntary employment termination initiated by an employee;
- Retirement - voluntary employment termination initiated by the employee meeting age, length of service, or other criteria for retirement from the organization;
- Discharge - involuntary employment termination initiated by the organization;
- Layoff - involuntary employment termination initiated by the organization for non-disciplinary reasons.

Resignation is a voluntary act initiated by the employee to terminate employment with the WRLC. Employees are expected to give adequate written notice of:

- at least two weeks' written notice of resignation for nonexempt employees and
- four weeks written notice for exempt employees.

At the discretion of the Director, vacation that was scheduled during the notice period can be suspended.

Employees must provide a letter of resignation containing their last day of employment with the WRLC to their supervisor and to the Director of Administration and Finance. Any equipment or other resources provided to the employee by the WRLC must be returned in acceptable condition prior to the termination date. Employees will receive their final pay in accordance with applicable state law. All accrued vacation hours up to the maximum accrual, will be paid (less any advances or other monies owed to WRLC.) Medical and personal leave hours are not payable and are forfeited upon termination. Medical and dental benefits are in effect until the last day of the month of termination. These benefits may be continued at the employee's expense if the employee so chooses. Contact the Director of Administration and Finance for detailed information regarding benefit continuation.

## **1002 Return of Property**

On or before a departing employee's final day of work, he or she must return all WRLC property to the appropriate supervisor and satisfy all outstanding financial obligations. Some examples include but are not limited to:

- cellular phones or pagers,
- credit cards,
- computer equipment, software, manuals or documentation ,
- keys, keycards, or security passes,
- tools or other WRLC-owned equipment.

Where permitted by applicable laws, WRLC may withhold from the employee's final paycheck the cost of any items that are not returned. The WRLC may also take all action deemed appropriate to recover or protect its property.

### **Transfer of Computer Files or Permission to Access Files**

Departing employees should transfer their computer files to their supervisors or otherwise provide means for the files to be accessed before they leave the WRLC. An employee's access to WRLC information systems will be discontinued upon departure.

### **Pay for Unused Leave**

Departing employees are paid for unused, accumulated paid leave. Hours paid cannot exceed the maximum leave accrual for that employee's position. No payment will be made for unused medical or personal leave.

### **1003 Severance Pay**

WRLC may grant severance pay to terminated employees under certain limited circumstances, most typically a reduction in force. Regular full-time employees will be considered eligible for severance pay if they have worked full-time for at least one year. Employees will not be considered eligible for severance pay if their employment is terminated by WRLC for cause, or by the employee through voluntary resignation, retirement, permanent disability or death.

*The WRLC retains the right to amend or terminate its severance policy at any time.*

## Acknowledgement of Receipt of Employee Handbook

I understand, acknowledge and agree:

- I have received a copy of the Washington Research Library Consortium's Employee Handbook.
- I am responsible for reading the contents of the Employee Handbook and for complying with its policies.
- I specifically understand and agree my employment with WRLC is for an unspecified term and may be terminated at the will of either WRLC or myself, with or without cause, and with or without notice.
- I understand and agree that the policies described in the Handbook *do not* constitute a contract of employment. No words or actions of WRLC will be deemed to create an express or implied contract of employment or require the Organization to have good cause for terminating my employment. No representative of WRLC is empowered or authorized to modify this at will relationship other than the Executive Director and the Board Chair, and then only in an express, written signed agreement.
- Any rules, policies, and benefits described in the Employee Handbook may be modified or varied from by the Organization at any time – except as required by law and except for the rights of the parties to terminate employment at will (which may be modified only by an express written agreement signed by both me and the Executive Director and/or the Board Chair). Changes may only be made if approved in writing by the Executive Director.

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Date:

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Employee Name Printed

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(Return to Human Resources  
Representative)

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Employee Signature