

MOUNTRAIL COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES & GUIDELINES

**Approved by Mountrail County Commissioners
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HIRING PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

Mountrail County believes that hiring qualified individuals contributes to the overall success of the County. Each employee is hired to make significant contributions to Mountrail County. In hiring the most qualified candidates for positions, the following process should be followed.

Recruiting efforts shall be based on the current and projected work force needs along with budgeted funding. The Human Resources department will arrange a meeting with the hiring Department Head to discuss the position, the requirements and the profile of the ideal candidate. Recruitment shall be a coordinated effort between the hiring Department Head and the Human Resources department. The Human Resources department will create job postings that describe the job opening as well as the application.

Recruitment

Intradepartmental applicants

Posting an open position within the immediate department only; this will be used to find interest, and qualifications for the open position. If an applicant is chosen for the position, this new position may be considered a promotion. If no applicant is awarded the position, it must be reposted externally.

Veteran's Preference doesn't apply to internal hiring actions.

Interdepartmental applicants

Current County employees with a satisfactory employment status may apply for internal job openings and will be considered based on their qualifications and ability to perform the job successfully. An internal hire will be considered as new hire. Internal candidates who are not selected will be notified by the Human Resources department.

Internal hire cannot be used as a means of promotion within a department.

Veteran's Preference doesn't apply to internal hiring actions.

External applicants

Announcements of open positions will be posted on the County's website, the official County newspaper, Job Service of ND and externally with sources appropriate for the position being filled. Jobs will remain open for a minimum of 14 days and will include a closing date and time by which applications must be received in order to be considered.

If additional candidates are desired after the closing date has passed, the Human Resources department and hiring manager may re-open the position for a minimum of 14 days.

Applications dated 6 months or less from the date of the original job posting may be considered for the same position previously posted as long as the position and details of the opening remain the same. If revisions were made, a new job posting must be developed.

The Human Resources department will be responsible for tracking all applicants and retaining applications and resumes as required.

Interview process

The Human Resources department and the hiring Department Head will screen applications and resumes prior to scheduling interviews. Interviews are generally conducted by the Human Resources department and the hiring manager using behavior-based interview questions and a structured interview process. Candidate evaluation forms will be completed after each interview and retained with the application.

The Human Resources department will notify applicants who are not selected for positions at Mountrail County.

Reference checks

The hiring Department Head or Human Resources may conduct professional reference checks and employment verification on the top candidates based on the results of the candidate evaluation forms completed by the interviewers.

Job offers

After a decision has been made to hire a candidate, an offer will be made contingent on the satisfactory completion of required testing and background checks. Background checks will vary depending on the position and may include criminal history, credit history, driving record, drug testing or any other relevant information for the job.

Intradepartmental or Interdepartmental applicants must complete required background checks or tests not previously completed.

Once the Human Resources department receives satisfactory results from all required background checks and tests, the Human Resources department will notify the Department Head to make the final job offer to the candidate.

Determination of Hiring Salary

In general, when incumbents meet the minimum qualifications required, starting salaries should be at the minimum of the assigned range for the classification and/or career level. The Department Head with review and approval from the Human Resources department and the Board of Commissioners has the ability to increase starting salaries higher than the minimum, but no greater than Step 5, based on the following criteria:

- Previous years of directly related experience equals 1 step for every two (2) full years of experience up to Step 5. New hire must provide verification of previous employment setting forth directly related duties, dates of employment, and must have left previous employment in “good standing”, and/or
- Previous years of related experience equals 1 step for every four (4) full years of experience up to Step 5. New hire must provide verification of previous employment setting forth related duties, dates of employment, and must have left previous employment in “good standing”.

Incumbents that do not meet minimum qualifications are considered an “under fill” and may start below the minimum of the assigned range for the classification and/or career level. In general, they would start 10% below the minimum salary (Step 1) of the classification hired for. They may be moved to the minimum of that classification once they have met the minimum qualifications presented in the job description upon approval from the Department Head, Human Resources department and the Board of Commissioners.

This policy allows for a flexible and effective compensation program. Starting salaries beyond Step 5 require special consideration, such as extreme market or recruitment conditions, as well as the Board of County Commissioners approval. A continued practice of hiring employees beyond the Step 5 usually causes severe employee morale issues with existing employees, and/or is a sign that the compensation system is not competitive with the market.

Promotional Increases (both within and across classifications)

A person promoted to a classification or career level in a higher range may receive an immediate increase to at least the minimum rate of the new salary range provided the individual meets the minimum qualifications of the position. This increase is separate and distinct from any annual salary adjustment.

Promotional increases are allowed by moving to the current step in new band/grade.

All starting salaries for promotional increases require prior approval from the Board of Mountrail County Commissioners.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

It is the policy of Mountrail County to conduct background checks, including motor vehicle record checks, as part of the selection process. This will ensure equal treatment of all applicants, while providing the Department Head in charge of the selection along with the interviewers the tools to complete the hiring process.

These checks may also be made at certain critical times during the employment process, including but not limited to, when an employee is given access to restricted or confidential items, information, or data or other significant employment events (such as promotions).

Due to the sensitive nature of the position and computer system access that is required, after conducting an interview, but before an offer of employment has been made, the Mountrail County's Sheriff's Office or Corrections Center will conduct a background check.

For Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone employees, the ND Department of Health & Human Services will conduct a background check.

For all other departments, the Human Resource Department will conduct a background check after an offer of employment with Mountrail County has been made and accepted by the applicant.

The types of checks to be conducted may include such inquiries such as criminal history, credit history, degree confirmation, employment references, and licensure confirmation. The information obtained via such inquiries will be considered in light of the needs and concerns underlying the check, and may take into account such things as employee directives or restrictions, the recency of the conviction, and the relevance of the information to the work to be performed.

Mountrail County may conduct a motor vehicle record (MVR) check at least annually for any employee listed as a driver of Mountrail County vehicles. Driving privileges as a driver of Mountrail County vehicles may be suspended for those who do not have a current, valid driver's license. Upon review of the MVR, Mountrail County may revoke driving privileges and/or take other disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Mountrail County retains the sole discretion to determine what impact the acquired information may have on the applicant or employee in question, including discontinuation of the application

process, denying access to restricted items/information/and data, and even termination of employment. Decisions are made on an individualized basis.

All background checks will only be accessed by the Mountrail County Human Resources department and the involved Mountrail County department head.

MOUNTRAIL COUNTY COOPERATIVE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

The Mountrail County Cooperative Work Experience (CWE) Program brings students into county government where they will gain an understanding of governmental processes while being introduced to the increasingly complex challenges facing Mountrail County. The program has been developed to help students gain practical training and hands-on, real-world experience while satisfying educational goals and preparing for a professional career.

CWE students are an important part of Mountrail County's team. CWE students work on projects that matter with teams that will rely on your skills and insights to help empower people, improve lives and inspire success. As a CWE student at Mountrail County you'll get the opportunity to take on real projects, while having fun and gaining skills along the way.

The CWE is a learning experience, providing student's practical experience of what they've been learning in the classroom; new skills and abilities are often broadened. CWE students also get to explore sound career options based on the opportunities available.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the Mountrail County Work Experience Program, a student:

- must be a resident of Mountrail County, and
- must be currently enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited high school, college, university, or vocational-technical program, and
- must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, and
- must be at least 16 years of age and entering their junior year of high school or an education level above a junior in high school, and
- must be able to provide their own transportation.

Students enrolled in a college, university, or vocational-technical program do not need to meet the requirements of residing in Mountrail County. Some departments may have greater stipulations on the age requirement due to working conditions or stipulations within a specific department.

Application Process

Students will go through an application process so that department heads and students can know each other prior to hiring, just as in any job. The job description will identify what type of work/skills the CWE will require.

Recruitment shall be a coordinated effort between the hiring Department Head and the Mountrail County Human Resources Department. The Human Resources Department will create job postings that describe the CWE position as well as the application process.

Students under the age of 18 will need parent permission to participate in the CWE, by having both the student and parent complete an authorization form. Students enrolled in high school will also need to submit two letters of recommendation with their application of employment/resume.

Each CWE will be advertised in the official county newspaper and on the Mountrail County website. A copy of the job posting will be sent to each school district in Mountrail County if the CWE position is open to a high school student.

Student Responsibilities

Upon hiring, student shall sign an Employee Acknowledgement Form. The student is responsible to read and comply with the policies contained in the Mountrail County Employee Handbook.

Student shall perform duties as assigned by the Department Head and/or their assigned supervisor.

Student shall be courteous and respectful to the Department Head, coworkers and the general public.

Student is expected to be at work on time on their scheduled work days and must communicate absences ahead of time with their Department Head.

Upon completion of the CWE, the student will be asked to complete an exit interview and rate the experience they had.

Department Responsibilities

Department Head will work with the student to determine a flexible work schedule that is acceptable to the Department Head and the student.

Department Head can extend the CWE beyond the school year to provide longer more specific technical training opportunities for the student.

The CWE is a commitment on both ends, the Department Head must be able to commit to a student/employee for the time frame hired. Once a student is placed with a specific department,

the student will not be allowed to apply for a CWE in another department during the time frame for which they were hired, barring unforeseen circumstances.

The Department Head shall be responsible to communicate with the educator.

The CWE can only be a true learning experience if constructive feedback is provided. The Department Head shall provide periodic formal and informal feedback and evaluations of the student.

Employment

All CWE students will be classified as temporary employees under the Mountrail County Employee Handbook. A temporary employee will receive all legally-mandated benefits but do not qualify for any of the employer's benefit programs. A temporary employee shall not exceed 720 hours per calendar year.

A CWE student can be discharged at any time. The Department Head shall communicate with the student the reasoning for dismissal.

Students who do not complete their cooperative work experience will not be eligible for another CWE with Mountrail County unless the Department Head determines there was a valid reason for not completing their CWE.

No background check will be completed on a CWE student unless a Department Head determines it necessary for the CWE position. All CWE's will be subject to a drug and/or alcohol testing in accordance to the Mountrail County Employment Handbook Policy.

Compensation

Salary will be set by the Board of Mountrail County Commissioners.

For more information regarding the Mountrail Work Cooperative Work Experience Program, contact the Mountrail County Human Resource Department at 701-628-8980.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance Evaluations

Supervisors are encouraged to provide support and feedback to their employees every day. Formal performance reviews will be conducted:

- When a new employee is completing his/her six (6) month introductory period.
- When corrective and disciplinary action is warranted.
- No less than annually for all non-introductory status employees.

Each department can conduct the annual performance evaluation in a manner that best suits their department. However, the evaluation must be reviewed with the employee, who must sign the form indicating participating in the process. The review should establish a clear understanding regarding:

- Essential job functions of the positions;
- How the team member's job contributes to the objectives of the department;
- How the team member and supervisor will work together to sustain, improve or build on existing team member performance;
- Identification and removal of barriers; and
- Identification of goals to learn and grow.

Employees who disagree with their evaluation may provide written comments, explanations, or rebuttal to any portion of the performance evaluation by either writing on the space provided or submitting a separate document to the Human Resources Department within fifteen (15) calendar days from the review date. All documents must be placed in the employee's personnel file with the evaluation.

All completed performance reviews must be forwarded to the Human Resources Department to be placed in the employee's personnel file.

Performance Improvement Plan

The Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is designed to facilitate constructive discussion between a staff member and his/her Department Head/Supervisor and to clarify the work performance to be improved.

It is implemented at the discretion of the Department Head when it becomes necessary to help a staff member improve his/her performance. The Department Head, with input from the Human

Resources Department, will develop the PIP. The purpose of the activities outlined is to help the employee attain the desired level of performance.

PIP Process

The Department Head will use the Mountrail County Performance Improvement Plan Form to document the areas of the employee's performance that need improvement. In documenting the main performance issues, be objective and specific. Provide facts and examples to further clarify the severity or pattern of performance concerns.

Next, the Department Head should establish a written action plan for improvement. This written action plan should include specific and measurable objectives that are accurate, relevant and time bound (typically 60-90 days). It will also need to be determined if the employee may need any additional resources, time, training, or coaching in order to meet these objectives. Identify in the plan exactly what management will do or provide to assist the employee in achieving these goals.

Once this is complete, the Department Head reviews the plan with the employee to clearly lay out the areas for improvement and plan of action. A signed copy by both the employee and Department Head of the Mountrail County Performance Improvement Plan Form must be submitted to the Human Resources Department after signed by all parties to be kept in the employee's personnel file.

The employee and Department Head will establish regular follow-up meetings to discuss and document progress toward objectives. Once the established deadline has been met and the employee has met the objectives in the written action plan, the Department Head shall close the PIP. Disciplinary action up to termination could result if an employee is unable to improve, refuses to commit to the PIP, or his/her performance get worse.

Disciplinary Action

All staff members are expected to adhere to County policies and rules of conduct. If an employee engages in inappropriate behavior or violates County policies or standards of conduct (i.e., misconduct or cause), the supervisor should begin the discipline process immediately.

Discipline for unacceptable conduct is normally issued progressively but will be issued in accordance to the degree of misconduct. Steps may be omitted or repeated depending on the frequency, severity, or nature of misconduct. For example, in instances of serious or gross misconduct, immediate termination of employment may be appropriate.

Good documentation is a key element of the disciplinary process to ensure fair, consistent and lawful. Supervisors are encouraged to document all disciplinary actions. Documentation may be as informal as jotting a note stating the facts of the incident, date and time. More severe disciplinary actions require a letter to advise the employee of failure to comply with a work rule or performance requirement and consequences of future violations. *While documentation may seem time-consuming, it is essential!* Plus, documentation will help Mountrail County prevail if a lawsuit results.

Documentation Guidelines

Documentation of formal performance concerns described herein should be placed in an employee's personnel file in the Human Resources Department. Documentation of informal measures (coaching and counseling) should not be placed in an employee's personnel file. Instead, supervisors should maintain such documentation in a manner that best suits the Department Head.

Discipline Tips for Supervisors and Managers

- **Always be consistent.**
 - Discipline all offenses in the same manner. Always give the same discipline for the same offense. Do not play favorites.
- **Think before you act.**
 - Only discipline when you are sure of the acts.
 - Never hand out discipline on the basis of rumors or assumptions.
- **Be reasonable.**
 - Before disciplining an employee for breaking a rule make sure the employee knew (or should have known) about the rule and the consequences of breaking it.
 - Before disciplining an employee for poor performance, you need to make sure the employee knew he/she was failing to meet your expectations and was given the chance to improve but didn't.
- **Communicate and discipline promptly.**
 - Make sure you discipline promptly after the offense has occurred. If you wait weeks to discipline, an employee will feel you are being unfair.
 - By delaying discipline, you leave yourself vulnerable to a discrimination lawsuit.

- **Discipline in private.**
 - Never hand out discipline in public in front of other employees. This belittles the employee being disciplined and reduces the morale of all employees.
 - Public discipline can be construed as public humiliation that caused emotional distress and can work against you in a court of law.
- **Keep it confidential.**
 - Your dealings with a disciplined employee should be kept as confidential as possible.
 - Confidentiality is important for two main reasons:
 - It will help foster trust between you and your employees.
 - Confidentiality is an important safeguard against lawsuits.
- **Discipline actions, not personalities.**
 - Your goal in disciplining employees should be to improve their conduct not to tear down their character.
 - If you focus on misconduct of the employee and on a strategy for improvement you preserve the employee's dignity.
- **Do not discriminate.**
 - The law absolutely prohibits you from being harder on some employees than others because of race, religion, national origin, and gender among other things.
- **Document everything!**
 - In order to have an effective discipline system you must document everything regarding the offense and the actions taken to correct the offense. This will help Mountrail County prevail if a lawsuit results.

SERVICE AWARDS AND RETIREMENT AWARDS

Service Awards

The years of service awards apply to all employees who have completed consecutive milestones of employment with Mountrail County.

The type of awards that can be given to employee is as follows:

- Three years: certificate and a gift not to exceed \$25
- Five years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$50
- Ten years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$100
- Fifteen years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$150
- Twenty years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$200
- Twenty-five years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$250
- Thirty years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$300
- Thirty-five years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$350
- Forty years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$400
- Forty-five years: certificate and gift not to exceed \$450
- Fifty years and every five-year increment thereafter: certificate and gift not to exceed \$500

Retirement Award

A retirement award can be provided to an employee who has a minimum of ten consecutive years of service with Mountrail County and who has not been previously recognized by Mountrail County as follows:

- A gift with a value not to exceed \$200.
- A farewell party upon retirement may be provided upon agreement of the employee and agency. Cost of the party not to exceed \$150.

Retirement awards may be withheld if there are documented problems with an employee's performance.

An employee may not receive cash as part of a service or retirement award program. An agency may provide a gift certificate.

A retirement plaque can be provided to any board member with eight or more continuous years of service on any county board they are part of.

FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)

Mountrail County acknowledges it is a political subdivision and is subject to the Family Medical and Leave Act (FMLA). In the event any employee has any questions with respect to FMLA leave, they should contact Human Resources to obtain additional information. It is the policy of the County to comply with all requirements of the FMLA.

To maintain communication between the Human Resources department and Department Head, upon receipt of a request for FMLA, the Human Resources Department will notify the appropriate Department Head of the employee's return of FMLA forms, as well as any other information in regards to the amount of leave needed. The Human Resources Department will also notify the Department Head of any changes to the amount of Leave needed for their employee.

During any period of FMLA, an employee will:

1. Use all accrued available leave (vacation and sick) before starting unpaid FMLA leave.
2. Not accrue any annual or sick leave.
3. Not be paid for holidays.
4. Not receive a Salary Increase. If merit increases had been issued during my leave, the increase will be reviewed upon my return. The County Commissioners will make the final determination if the increase will be granted.

CREDIT CARD POLICY

County credit card use is to simplify the process for purchase. Individual credit limits, including card and cycle limits, vary as determined by the department heads. Failure to use the credit card in accordance with applicable policies and procedures may result in revocation of the card and may involve appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including termination and prosecution.

The County credit card cannot be used for any of the following; to obtain cash advances; to obtain bank checks; to obtain traveler's checks; or to obtain electronic cash transfers for expenses other than those incurred by the assigned employee named on the card, or for personal expenses. Further, the County credit card cannot be used in violation of Employee Handbook policy #208 (Travel).

Prior to being allowed to have the use of a card, a card holder must sign a **Credit Cardholder User Agreement** form provided by Mountrail County. By signing the agreement form, cardholders agree to adhere to the guidelines established in this policy.

Cardholder Responsibilities

The cardholder is responsible for the following:

- Safeguarding the credit card
- Keeping in her/his possession an itemized receipt for each purchase.
- Forwarding the original receipts to designated supervisor within 3 days of purchase.
- Notifying his/her supervisor and County Auditor's office in the event of a lost or stolen credit card.
- All expired credit cards must be returned to the Mountrail County Auditor's office for destruction.
- Resolving disputes as described in return, credits and disputed items in this policy.
- Making only authorized purchases.

Returns, Credits, and Disputed Items

The cardholder is responsible to follow up with the merchant or bank on any erroneous charges, disputed items, or returns as soon as possible. In most cases, disputes may be resolved directly between the card holder and the supplier.

Returns

The supplier should issue credit for any item approved for return. The credit should appear on a subsequent statement. Returned items that were purchased with the credit card must be

credited back to the card. Do not accept a refund in cash or check. Keep documentation of credits, returns, and exchanges.

Disputed items

If a resolution on a disputed charge cannot be reached with the supplier, notify the County Auditor's office to work with the card company to resolve the dispute.

Review Process

The cardholder's supervisor should:

- Review all credit card receipts and verify that all purchases are for county business and comply with all applicable rules and policies.
- Prepare a voucher for payment and attached all original receipts. The voucher must be turned into the Mountrail County Auditor's office for processing by the voucher deadline set by the Auditor's office.
- The card may not be used for personal transactions under any circumstances. If a cardholder's supervisor determines a personal transaction has occurred, the supervisor shall notify the employee/appointed official/elected official and the Auditor as soon as practicable. Arrangements for reimbursement will be made with the Auditor.

If it is determined that personal or other unauthorized charges are occurring on the credit card, appropriate disciplinary steps, up to and including termination, will be taken to resolve the misuse/abuse of the credit card.

APPENDIXES