

Staff Handbook AKA Personnel Policy

A mostly “out of the box” template

Why A Handbook Matters

A handbook is more than just a document

- Sets clear expectations before problems arise
- Creates consistency in how people are treated and managed
- Gives supervisors and church leaders a framework for decisions
- Helps employees and volunteers know where to turn with questions or concerns
- Supports the church's mission by clarifying how we work together

Three Layers of Church Policies

Broad church policies

Apply to the life and ministry of the church, not just employees

Examples: child & vulnerable adult protection, safety, confidentiality, financial controls

Staff Handbook

Governs the employment relationship and workplace expectations

Examples: attendance, pay, timekeeping, leave, conduct, corrective action

Volunteer Expectations

Pieces of Staff Handbook, can be edited down, or simply referred to - clarifies service expectations, boundaries, safety, reporting, and accountability

Examples: child & vulnerable adult protections, reporting, interactions with “clients”

What Belongs in a Personnel Policy?

Welcome, purpose, scope, and basic employment language

Hiring, orientation, employment classifications, and accommodations

Wage and hour practices: attendance, timekeeping, pay, overtime

Performance, corrective action, conflict resolution, resignation

General workplace expectations: conduct, technology, social media, confidentiality

Benefits, leave, safety, workers' compensation, and workplace violence

How employees raise concerns, to whom and whom will respond

Acknowledgment that the employee received and reviewed the policy

The Template: What's Included

Core policies: welcome, at-will employment, ethics, revisions

Hiring & orientation: conflicts, I-9, introductory period, religious accommodation

Wage & hour: attendance, direct deposit, classifications, deductions, timekeeping

Performance & separation: corrective action, conflict resolution, resignation, conduct

General policies: solicitation, appearance, devices, social media, disclosures, privacy

Benefits & safety: holidays, PTO, workers' compensation, drugs/alcohol, violence

Community relations plus Michigan-specific policies

Acknowledgment of receipt and review

Core Policies: Set Expectations First

Welcome: explain the ministry context and purpose of the handbook

Ethics: honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, confidentiality

Authority: clarify who may speak or act on behalf of the church

Revisions: explain that policies may change as permitted by law

Employment language: make the relationship and limitations clear

Point people to a supervisor, pastor, or SPRC when questions arise

Hiring, Pay & Employment Practices

Define exempt and nonexempt classifications

Establish accurate timekeeping for nonexempt employees

Prohibit off-the-clock work and inaccurate time records

Explain attendance and call-off expectations

Document pay periods, payroll practices, and deductions

Address hiring documentation and orientation

Include reasonable accommodation language where applicable

Performance, Conflict & Separation

Corrective action: coaching, counseling, warnings, and other responses

Clarify that serious misconduct may require immediate action

Provide an open-door / conflict-resolution process

Identify alternative reporting paths when the supervisor is the concern

Prohibit retaliation for good-faith concerns and investigations

Explain resignation, return of church property, and final wages

General Workplace Policies

Personal appearance and workplace expectations

Personal cell phones and mobile devices

Social media and confidentiality

Third-party and media inquiries

Church property and workplace privacy

Conflicts of interest

Standards of conduct

Safety, Protection & Risk

Workers' compensation and reporting workplace injuries

General workplace safety

Drug and alcohol expectations

Workplace violence and threat reporting

Harassment and discrimination

Child & vulnerable adult protection

Clear reporting and investigation processes

Benefits & Leave

Identify eligible benefits and who qualifies

Explain holidays and paid time off

Describe leave and notice procedures

Address workers' compensation

Include required state and federal leave provisions

Keep the written policy aligned with actual payroll and leave practices

What About Volunteers?

Mission and role expectations

Appropriate conduct and boundaries

Child & vulnerable adult protection

Confidentiality and privacy

Safety and emergency procedures

Technology, social media, and photography expectations

How concerns are reported

Who supervises the volunteer

How the church may end a volunteer assignment

Cook This Template Into Your Own



SAVE - policies that fit your church and reflect actual practice

EDIT- church name, contacts, SPRC role, pay/leave details, holidays, reporting paths

ADD - church-specific procedures that are important to your ministry

REMOVE - provisions that do not apply or that conflict with actual practice

Our goal was to make it ready to cook, not ready to eat!

Take It Home

1. Review the template with your leadership
2. Compare it with what your church actually does
3. Customize the bolded church-specific details
4. Identify gaps in safety, volunteer, and reporting policies
5. Approve and distribute the final handbook
6. Use it in orientation and review it periodically

Questions?