

Nepotism Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to avoid favoritism, the appearance of or potential for favoritism, and conflicts of interest and loyalty often associated with nepotism. Nepotism is inconsistent with the County's longstanding policy of making employment decisions and other business decisions based solely on the County's needs and individual qualifications, skills, ability and performance. Grand Traverse County is committed to a policy of employment and advancement based on qualifications and merit and does not discriminate in favor of or in opposition to the employment of relatives.

POLICY & PROCEDURE

Organizations can realize both benefits and problems by engaging in the practice of nepotism. As defined by Merriam-Webster, nepotism is favoritism based on kinship. With the County continually challenged to find qualified, competent employees who will fit the organizational culture, family referrals can be a way to fill positions. From an employee relations standpoint, depending on how prevalent nepotism is within the organization, unrelated employees may feel disadvantaged.

Due to these competing concerns, policies and practices related to this issue need to be clear and transparent. When family member hires or promotions are made, the reasons for these decisions need to be objective and credible.

The policy below establishes rules for hiring family members and former employees. Grand Traverse County is an equal opportunity employer and hires individuals based solely on their qualification and ability to do the job to be filled.

1. Grand Traverse County will consider a member of an employee's family for employment if the applicant possesses all the qualifications for employment for the position.

No person shall be hired, appointed, promoted, or transferred within the County departments where they have a close personal relationship, close business relationship, or are in any other way closely related to or dependent upon another employee, where one employee will be put in a position of direct and/or indirect supervision of the other. In addition, others, who, because of their position or customary involvement within the County will be prohibited from influencing or seeking favor and will be deemed in violation of this policy.

For purposes of this policy, "close personal relationship" may be, but is not limited to, natural, adoptive, step, foster, or by marriage in nature including spouse, child, parent, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, first cousin, aunt, uncle, niece and nephew, or any other person who resides in the same household as the employee. For purpose of this policy "closely related to" may be, but is not limited to a strong connection between them. They are related because a family member may have married into their family.

2. Employees who marry or become members of the same household may continue employment if there is not:

- a) Direct or indirect supervisor/subordinate relationship between the employees or
- b) An actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Should one of the above situations occur, Grand Traverse County will attempt to find a suitable position within another department to which one of the affected employees may transfer. If accommodations of this nature are not feasible, the affected employees will be permitted to determine which of them will resign their employment. If they do not choose, both employees shall be separated from County service.

3. Former employees who left the County in good standing may be considered for reemployment. Former employees who resigned without written notice or who were dismissed for disciplinary reasons may not be considered for reemployment.

A former employee who is reemployed will be considered a new employee from the date of reemployment. Employees who retire may be eligible, in certain circumstances, to be considered for reemployment within the same department in the same capacity for a duration not to exceed six (6) months only for the purposes of training a new employee. Reemployed retired employees shall not be eligible for fringe benefits during this six (6) month period of reemployment.

Definitions

Nepotism: favoritism in the workplace based on kinship, which ordinarily consists of making employment or other business decisions based on a family relationship.

Employment decisions: the full spectrum of employment or volunteer-related actions, including but not limited to decisions related to hiring, supervision, direction of work, promotion, compensation, work/volunteer hours, performance evaluation, termination and all other terms and conditions of employment or volunteer-related actions.

Business decisions: decisions related to the full spectrum of the County's activities (e.g., buying, hiring, selling, contracting, licensing, leasing) or otherwise involving the expenditure of the County's funds or the use of the County's resources.

Relative: the spouse, domestic partner, anyone in a romantic relationship and, whether by blood, adoption, marriage or domestic partnership, the child, parent, grandparent, sibling, grandchild, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew, or any person residing in the immediate household (or the household of the spouse or domestic partner of any of these relatives) of the County employee, or his or her spouse or domestic partner, or person in a romantic relationship.

Note: This policy may differ for those employees who are members of recognized unions, organizations, or associations. Any questions related to the content of this policy, or its interpretation, should be directed to Human Resources.