

# Missoula Area Education Cooperative

## 2025 – 2026 Employee Handbook

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the Missoula Area Education Cooperative. The purpose of this handbook is to acquaint you with general Management Council policies that govern and affect your employment and to outline the benefits available to you as an employee of the Cooperative.

Because this handbook is a general source of information, it is not intended to be, and should not be interpreted as, a contract. It is **not** an all-encompassing document and may not cover every possible situation or unusual circumstance. If a conflict exists between information in this handbook and Management Council policy or administrative procedures, the policies and procedures govern. It is the employee's responsibility to refer to the actual policies and/or administrative procedures for further information. Complete copies of those documents are available at the Cooperative Office. Any employee is free to review official policies and procedures and is expected to be familiar with those related to his/her job responsibilities.

In this handbook, **bolded policy codes** indicate related Cooperative policies. If an employee has questions, s/he should contact Stacia Vaughn in the Cooperative Office.

## **FUTURE POLICY CHANGES**

Although every effort will be made to update the handbook on a timely basis, the Missoula Area Education Cooperative Management Council reserves the right, and has the sole discretion, to change any policies, procedures, benefits, and terms of employment without notice, consultation, or publication, except as may be required by contractual agreements and law. The Cooperative reserves the right, and has the sole discretion, to modify or change any portion of this handbook at any time.

## **GENERAL TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT**

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT**

The Missoula Area Education Cooperative is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Cooperative does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, genetic information, sex, or veteran status, as required by law. "Sex" includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The Cooperative is required by federal and state law, including but not limited to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, and Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Montana Human Rights Act, and their regulations to not discriminate against individuals in violation of these laws.

Reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities will be made as required by law. If considerations of sex, age or disability have a bona fide relationship to the unique requirements of a particular position or if there are federal or state legal requirements that apply, then sex, age or disability may be taken into account as a bona fide occupational qualification, provided such consideration is consistent with governing law. **Policy 2000.**

If you have questions concerning Cooperative compliance with state and federal equal opportunity employment laws, contact:

Stacia Vaughn  
Director  
2825 Stockyard Rd., Ste I-2  
Missoula, MT 59808  
406-532-4861  
[svaughn@maecooperative.org](mailto:svaughn@maecooperative.org)

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Inquiries may also be directed to the Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education.

#### **HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION**

The Cooperative intends that employees have a safe and orderly work environment in which to do their jobs. Therefore, the Cooperative does not condone and will not tolerate harassment of employees, discrimination against employees, or any act prohibited by Cooperative policy that disrupts the work place and/or keeps employees from doing their jobs.

Employees are expected to be civil, respectful, and act in an orderly manner toward one another. Workplace harassment and bullying may be defined as the deliberate, hurtful, repeated mistreatment of an employee, driven by a desire to abuse or control that individual.

Common behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Injuring, threatening, harassing or intimidating a staff member, a member district employee, or any other person;
- Defamation of character and/or reputation;
- Yelling, shouting, and screaming; hostile glares and other intimidating gestures toward fellow employees;
- Behind-the-back-put-downs, insulting, and unfair criticism;
- Damaging or threatening to damage another's property;
- The deliberate sabotage and undermining of another's work performance;
- Impeding, delaying, or otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of the district employee program or any other activity occurring on school property;
- Operating a motor vehicle in a risky manner to scare or intimidate;

- Exclusion or social isolation; and
- Other inappropriate behavior that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates a co-worker, including occurrences in front of another co-worker, students, parents, contractors or visitors.

Any employee who believes that he or she, or any other employee or student is being subjected to harassment or discrimination should bring the matter to the attention of the Cooperative's Director and/or the Title IX Coordinator. The Cooperative will investigate any such concerns promptly and confidentially to the extent possible. Complaints will be addressed via the applicable grievance procedure.

No employee will be subject to any form of reprisal or retaliation for having made a good-faith complaint under this policy. For complete information concerning the Cooperative's position prohibiting harassment/discrimination, assistance in reporting and responding to alleged incidents, and examples of prohibited behaviors, employees should refer to the Cooperative's policies and related procedures. A written copy of the Complaint Procedure is available at the Cooperative Office. **Policies 1030 and 2005.**

## **HIRING**

All personnel are required to sign a written contract with the Cooperative. For further information on hiring, refer to **Policies 2000 and 2010**. All employees shall be required to provide verification of their legal ability to work in the United States upon hire and as required by law.

## **JOB RESPONSIBILITIES**

All employees receive a copy of their job description and responsibilities for review. The Director may assign other duties as needed. Employees should ask the Director if they have questions regarding their assigned duties and/or responsibilities. **Policy 2025.**

## **CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK**

Any individual, in any capacity on behalf of the Cooperative, who will have unsupervised contact with a student in school, at a school sponsored activity, or in transit to an activity, shall submit to a criminal background investigation conducted by the appropriate law enforcement agency before such contact. Any offer of employment or appointment will be contingent on results of the criminal background check. This policy shall also be applied to an employee of a person or firm holding a contract with the Cooperative if the employee is working on school property, and the employee may have unsupervised access to students.

Any requirement of an applicant or employee of a contractor to submit to a fingerprint background check will be in compliance with the National Child Protection Act and applicable federal regulations. If an applicant has any prior record of arrest or conviction by any local, state, or federal law enforcement agency for an offense other than a minor traffic violation, the facts must be reviewed by the Director, who will decide whether the applicant will be declared eligible for

appointment or employment. Arrests resolved without conviction will not be considered in the hiring process, unless the charges are pending. The Director shall keep all criminal record information confidential as required by law. **Policy 2015.**

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In certain circumstances employees may receive confidential information regarding students' or employees' medical, discipline or court records. Employees are required to keep student and personnel information in the strictest confidence and are legally prohibited from passing confidential information along to any unauthorized individual. If employees have any questions about access to confidential information, they should speak to the Cooperative Director. **Policies 2035 and 2065.**

#### **SALARIES AND PAYROLL DISTRIBUTION**

Checks are issued according to a schedule approved by the Management Council. Salaries for certified personnel are based on a salary schedule providing for 187 days of employment. Determination of and changes to certified employees' rank and experience are determined in compliance with the Professional Agreement. Classified personnel may be paid on an hourly or salary basis, as determined by the Management Council.

#### **BENEFITS AND LEAVE**

##### **INSURANCE**

The Cooperative provides unemployment insurance, workers' compensation and liability insurance for all employees. In addition, the Cooperative provides group health to eligible employees. Certified employees are eligible for insurance benefits as stated in the current Professional Agreement. Classified employees who are .5 FTE or greater are eligible for a single insurance benefit. **Policy 2045.**

##### **SALARY DEDUCTIONS**

The Cooperative makes all payroll deductions required by law or as authorized by the employee.

##### **EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT**

Cooperative personnel are reimbursed for travel that is required as part of their duties or for school-related activities approved by the Director. The Director will notify staff of expense reimbursement guidelines as necessary. **Policy 2085.**

##### **HOLIDAYS**

Holidays for certified staff are dictated in part by the school calendar. Temporary employees will not receive holiday pay. Part-time employees will receive holiday pay on a prorated basis. The Cooperative will observe all school holidays as required by statute. When an eligible employee is required to work

any of the school holidays, another day shall be granted in lieu of such holiday, unless the employee elects to be paid for the holiday in addition to the employee's regular pay for all time worked on the holiday.

When a school holiday falls on Sunday, the following Monday will not be a holiday. When a school holiday falls on Saturday, the preceding Friday will not be a holiday. When a holiday occurs during a period in which vacation is being taken by an employee, the holiday will not be charged against the employee's annual leave. **Policy 2055.**

## **LEAVE**

In order to provide the highest level of service, employees are expected to be at work and on time every day. However, when circumstances dictate, the Cooperative provides leave to its employees pursuant to Montana law, Professional Agreement and individual contracts. Employees who must be absent should inform the Cooperative Director immediately. Listed below is general information regarding several types of leave available to employees. Please note that in many cases a written request, submitted for approval before leave begins, is required. **Policy 2050.**

### *Sick Leave and Bereavement Leave*

Certified employees will be granted sick leave according to terms of the Professional Agreement. Administrators and classified employees shall be granted sick leave pursuant to Montana law governing public employees. Unless otherwise stated by contract, "sick leave" means a leave of absence, with pay, for an illness suffered by an employee or a member of the employee's immediate family. "Immediate family" is defined in the current Professional Agreement and in Cooperative policy.

Certified employees will be granted bereavement leave according to the terms of the Professional Agreement. A classified employee who has a death in the family is eligible for up to 5 days of paid bereavement leave, which the Director has the authority to approve. Employees seeking more than 5 days of bereavement leave must apply for that leave through the Director, who may grant additional, unpaid leave at his or her sole discretion. For the purposes of bereavement leave, "family" is defined as the employee's spouse, domestic partner, child, parents/guardians/step-parents, sibling, grandparents and spouse or domestic partner's like relations.

### *Personal and Emergency Leave*

Certified employees will be granted personal and emergency leave according to the terms of the Professional Agreement. Administrators will be granted personal and emergency leave pursuant to the terms of their individual contracts, or at the discretion of the Management Council. Classified staff may be granted personal and emergency leave in the discretion of the Director. Personal and emergency leave is without pay unless otherwise stated.

### *Civic Duties Leave*

Employees shall be granted leave for service on a jury, in the Legislature or in response to a subpoena in accordance with state law. Each employee who is under proper summons as a juror or witness shall collect all fees and allowances payable as a result of the service and forward the fees to the appropriate accounting office. Juror and witness fees shall be applied against the amount due the employee from his employer. However, if an employee elects to charge his juror or witness time off against his annual leave, he shall not be required to remit his juror fees to his employer. In no instance is an employee required to remit to his employer any expense or mileage allowance paid him by the court.

### *Military Leave*

Employees shall be granted leave for service in the military in accordance with state and federal law. The Cooperative will comply with all federal regulations regarding the employee's return to service following military leave.

### *Vacation Leave*

Administrators and classified employees will be granted vacation leave pursuant to Montana law. The Cooperative, in its sole discretion, may provide cash compensation for unused vacation leave in lieu of the accumulation of vacation leave.

### *Parental/Maternity Leave*

The Cooperative will provide parenting or maternity leave to its employees pursuant to the Family Medical Leave Act and Montana law.

### *Family Medical Leave Act*

The Cooperative will comply with the requirements of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for all employees who qualify.

#### Eligibility

Employees are eligible if they have worked for the Cooperative for at least one (1) year, and for one thousand two hundred fifty (1,250) hours over the previous twelve (12) months, and if there have been at least fifty (50) Cooperative employees within seventy-five (75) miles for each working day during twenty (20) or more workweeks in the current or preceding calendar year.

#### Length/Purpose of Leave

In accordance with provisions of the FMLA, a leave of absence of up to twelve (12) weeks during a twelve-(12)-month period may be granted to an eligible employee for the following reasons: 1) birth of a child; 2) placement of a child for adoption or foster care; 3) a serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform functions of the job; 4) to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition; 5) because of a qualifying exigency (as the Secretary shall, by regulation, determine) arising out of the fact that the spouse or a son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on

covered active duty as a member of the regular Armed Forces or is on covered active duty or is under a call or order to covered active duty as a Member of the National Guard or Reserves.

#### Servicemember Family Leave

An eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered servicemember, who is a current member (or a member on the temporary disability retired list) of the Regular Armed Forces, National Guard, Reserves, or is a veteran who has incurred an injury or illness in the line of duty while on active duty, shall be entitled to a total of twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave during a twelve-(12)-month period to care for the servicemember. The leave described in this paragraph shall only be available during a single twelve-(12)-month period.

For additional information, please refer to **Policy 2053**. Please see the Director with any questions about eligibility or benefits.

## **PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

### **EMPLOYMENT AND ASSIGNMENT**

Each licensed employee will be employed under a written contract, subject to the terms and conditions of the Professional Agreement and Cooperative policies. Renewal and non-renewal will be determined by the Management Council after receiving a recommendation from the Director and in conformance with law.

Each classified employee will be employed under a written contract for a specified term, with a beginning and ending date. Such employees shall have no expectation of continued employment from year to year, and contracts of employment may be renewed or non-renewed each year, at the Cooperative's sole option. The Cooperative reserves the right to change employment conditions affecting an employee's duties, assignment, supervisor, or grade.

The Director may assign, reassign, and/or transfer positions and duties of all staff, subject to any provisions contained in the Professional Agreement. The Director will provide for a system of assignment, reassignment, and transfer of classified staff, including voluntary transfers and promotions. Nothing in this policy prevents reassignment of a staff member during a school year. **Policy 2025**.

### **EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE**

Cooperative employees who fail to fulfill their job responsibilities or to follow reasonable directions of their supervisors, or who conduct themselves on or off the job in ways that affect their effectiveness on the job, may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Behavior, conduct, or action that may call for disciplinary action or dismissal includes, but is not limited to, reasonable job-related grounds based on a failure to satisfactorily perform job duties, disruption of the Cooperative or member school district's operation, or other legitimate reasons.

Discipline will be reasonably appropriate to the circumstance and will include, but not be limited to, the Director's right to reprimand an employee and the right to suspend an employee, with or without pay, or

to impose other appropriate disciplinary sanctions. In accordance with Montana law, only the Management Council may terminate an employee or non-renew employment. **Policies 2035 and 2065.**

No public officer or public employee shall retaliate against or condone or threaten to retaliate against an individual who, in good faith, alleges waste, fraud or abuse.

## **EVALUATIONS**

Each non-administrative staff member's job performance will be evaluated by the Cooperative Director. The evaluation process includes scheduled annual evaluations using forms applicable to the job classification and description, and day-to-day appraisals. Certified staff members shall be evaluated according to the terms stated in the Professional Agreement.

The Cooperative Director will provide a copy of the completed evaluation to the staff member and will provide opportunity to discuss the evaluation. The original should be signed by the staff member and filed in the staff member's personnel file. If the staff member refuses to sign the evaluation, the Director should note the refusal on the evaluation. Staff members may have up to 10 working days to submit a rebuttal to the evaluation for inclusion in the file. Employees have a right to access to the evaluation instrument. **Policy 2060.**

## **PERSONNEL RECORDS**

The Cooperative maintains a complete personnel record for every current and former employee. The employees' personnel records will be maintained in the Cooperative's administrative office, under the Director's supervision. Employees and their designees will be given supervised access to their personnel records in the administrative office. Copies may be given to employees and their designees, but under no circumstances may the original file leave the administrative office. In addition to the Director or other designees, the Management Council may grant a member of the Council access to cumulative personnel files. Counsel retained by the Management Council will also have access to a cumulative personnel file. Personnel records will be maintained for 10 years after the employee has left the District's employment.

A staff member's personnel file may contain such information as applications for employment, references, records relative to compensation, payroll deductions, evaluations, complaints, and written disciplinary actions. All records containing medical-condition information, such as workers' compensation reports and release/permission to return to work forms, will be kept confidential, in a separate file from personnel records.

All personnel records are considered confidential and not open to public inspection.

No material derogatory to an employee's conduct, service, character, or personality shall be placed in the file, unless such placement is authorized by the Director, as indicated by her initials, and unless the employee has had the opportunity to read the material. The employee shall be entitled to respond to the material and to have that response placed in the file, if requested in a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 10 working days.

## **EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

### *Absenteeism and Tardiness*

Regular and timely attendance is an essential function of each position within the Cooperative. Employees are expected to report for work on time and to notify the Cooperative Director and the member school if they must be tardy or absent. Failure to provide regular and timely attendance may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### *Disrupting the Educational Process*

Any employee who participates in or encourages activities that disrupt the educational process or the operations of the Cooperative may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination. **Policy 2065.** Behavior that disrupts the educational process includes, but is not limited to:

- ✗ conduct that threatens the health, safety or welfare of others;
- ✗ conduct that may damage public or private property (including the property of students or staff);
- ✗ illegal activity;
- ✗ conduct that interferes with a student's access to educational opportunities or programs, including ability to attend, participate in, and benefit from instructional and extracurricular activities; or
- ✗ conduct that disrupts delivery of instructional services or interferes with the orderly administration of the Cooperative, school and school-related activities or member District operations.

### *Drug-Free/Alcohol-Free Schools*

Employees must not manufacture, distribute, dispense, be under the influence of, purchase, possess, use, or attempt to obtain in the workplace or in the performance of duties, alcohol or any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana (include medical marijuana) or any other controlled substance. A controlled substance is one that is not legally obtainable, or one that is legally obtainable and not being used as prescribed, or referenced in federal and state controlled substance acts. Any employee who violates the terms of the Cooperative or member District's drug-free/alcohol-free policies may be suspended, nonrenewed or terminated. Violations may result in notification of appropriate legal officials. Any employee convicted of a workplace violation of drug abuse statutes must notify the Director of the conviction within five (5) working days. **Policy 2020.**

The use of any legally obtained prescription drug or other controlled substance (including medical marijuana) by any employee while performing their duties or while in a Cooperative or school facility is prohibited to the extent such use may affect the safety of the employee, co-workers, or members of the public, the employee's job performance, or the safe and efficient operation of Cooperative and school facilities. Employees are required to advise the director if they are taking a legal prescription drug or other controlled substance (including medical marijuana) that may have adverse effects on

their ability to perform their job safely and efficiently. The director shall determine whether the employee poses a threat to his or her own safety, the safety of other employees, or significantly affects his or her job performance if using the legally obtained prescription drug or other controlled substance (including medical marijuana) and can continue working. The Cooperative will provide reasonable accommodations as required by law for an employee who cannot safely perform his or her job duties because of use of a legally obtained prescription drug or other controlled substance (including medical marijuana).

#### *Contact Information*

Employees are required to annually update their contact information, including phone number and physical address, at the beginning of each school. If an employee's contact information changes at any time after the beginning of the school, the employee is required to update his/her contact information to the current information. Contact the Cooperative Office to update contact information.

#### *Weapons*

Carrying, bringing, using or possessing any weapon or dangerous instrument in any school building, on school grounds, in any school vehicle, or at any school-sponsored activity is prohibited. Except for authorized law enforcement officials, the Cooperative member school districts prohibit carrying concealed weapons on member District property. Staff members who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action, including termination.

#### *Dress and Appearance*

Cooperative employees are required to dress in a professional manner. No mode of attire will be considered proper if it distracts from or is disruptive of the positive learning environment of the school to which the employee is assigned or the Cooperative office.

#### *Participation in Political Activities*

Cooperative employees may exercise their right to participate fully in affairs of public interest on a local, county, state, and national level, on the same basis as any citizen in public or private employment and within the law. Employees may, within the limitations imposed by state and federal laws and regulations, choose any side of a particular issue and support their viewpoints as they desire, by vote, discussion, or persuading others. Such discussion and persuasion, however, may not be carried on during the performance of Cooperative duties.

#### *Participation in Religious Activities*

Employees may not encourage, discourage, persuade, dissuade, sponsor, participate in, or discriminate against a religious activity or an activity because of its religious content while in the course of performing official duties of that employee's position(s) with the Cooperative.

### *Tobacco and Marijuana Products*

The Cooperative member school districts maintain tobacco and marijuana free buildings and grounds as required by Montana law. Tobacco includes, but is not limited to, vapor products, alternative nicotine products, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation. Marijuana products are products that contain marijuana for use by a consumer and include but are not limited to edible products, ointments, tinctures, marijuana derivatives, marijuana concentrates, and marijuana intended for use by smoking or vaping. Use of tobacco and marijuana products will not be allowed in any member school district buildings, grounds or vehicles. However, nothing prohibits an employee from using a smoking cessation product on Cooperative or district property. An employee may use a tobacco product, vapor product, alternative nicotine product, or marijuana product in a classroom or otherwise on Cooperative or school property as part of a lecture, demonstration, or educational forum concerning the risks of such product with prior notice and approval of the building administrator. **Policy 2020.**

### *Use of School Property/Electronic Communication System/Social Networking Pages*

Employees may not use any Cooperative or member District facility, vehicle, electronic communication system, equipment, or materials to perform outside work. These items (including security codes and electronic records such as e-mail) are Cooperative and/or member District property. Employees may not use a code, access a file, or retrieve any stored communication unless they have been given authorization to do so. Employees cannot expect confidentiality or privacy of the information in their e-mail accounts, and should review **Policy 2075** for specific information regarding use of the Internet. Authorized Cooperative and member District personnel may monitor the use of electronic equipment from time to time, and violations of **Policy 2075** may result in discipline up to and including termination.

The on-campus and off-campus conduct of employees may impact their ability to function professionally and effectively in the Cooperative and/or member school districts. Given student and parent interest in and use of electronic media, this is especially true as related to employees' action on electronic social networking websites. Employees may not set up or update their personal electronic social networking websites using the Cooperative and/or member District's computers, network or equipment. Employees who set up personal electronic social networking webpages on their home or personal computers are responsible for the content of their webpages, including but not limited to: content added by employees, their friends or members of the public who can access their webpages; or content that is linked to the employees' webpages.

Employees who set up personal websites or webpages do so at their own risk; however, employees are strongly encouraged to keep their personal webpages private and to prevent students and the parents of students from accessing their personal webpages.

The Cooperative supports the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to assist staff members, including but not limited to as a tool to assist with planning, differentiation, and productivity. The use of AI tools shall not act as a substitute for teaching or providing services to students or to replace the staff member's professional judgment. Staff members shall not input any student names,

grades, or other personally identifiable information into AI tools. Staff members may be required by the Director to disclose the use of AI tools.

#### *Health, Safety and Security*

It is the intent of the Cooperative to provide a safe and healthful working environment for all employees. The Cooperative and member districts may require the use of personal protective equipment, including but not limited to face masks, if necessary for the safety and health of staff and students. Employees should report any security hazard or conditions they believe to be unsafe to the Cooperative Director. For information on a particular member District's Safety Plan and Bloodborne Pathogen Control Plan, contact the building principal or see the particular member District's *Policy Manual* and related procedures. **Policy 4040.**

Except for those vaccinations required by law, the Cooperative will not discriminate against an employee by denying or withholding employment opportunities based upon the employee's vaccination status.

#### *Assaults and Threats of Violence*

Employees should immediately report any threats they receive (oral or written) to the Cooperative Director and to the appropriate member District official. **Policy 4040.**

#### *Child Abuse*

A Cooperative employee who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect, as a result of information they receive in their professional or official capacity, that a student may be an abused or neglected child (which includes but is not limited to child sex trafficking and human trafficking), regardless of whether the person suspected of causing the abuse or neglect is a parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare, shall report such a case to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and notify the Director and the building administrator that a report has been made. An employee does not discharge the obligation to personally report by notifying the Director or building administrator. Any Cooperative employee who fails to report a suspected case of abuse or neglect to the Department of Public Health and Human Services, or who prevents another person from doing so, may be civilly liable for damages proximately caused by such failure or prevention and is guilty of a misdemeanor. The employee will also be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. In the event that a DPHHS reveals information to an employee after he or she makes a report or requests that information be shared with another employee, employees receiving such information shall keep the information confidential. **Policy 2030.**

#### *Gifts*

Employees are to avoid accepting anything of value offered by another for the purpose of influencing his/her professional judgment.

### *Grievances/Communications*

Cooperative employees shall use the Complaint Procedure to address complaints/concerns about Cooperative policies, procedures and directives that cannot be resolved informally. Employees covered by the Professional Agreement must use the grievance procedure in that contract to address alleged violations of the Contract. **Policy 1030** contains the Cooperative's Complaint Procedure, which applies to all grievances except for those relating to complaints/concerns about sexual discrimination, including sexual harassment, and disability discrimination, or is otherwise superseded by federal or state law.

Cooperative employees shall use the Title IX Grievance Procedure to address complaints/concerns about sexual harassment.

Cooperative employees shall use the Section 504 Grievance Procedure to address complaints/concerns about disability discrimination. Grievance procedures can be found on the Cooperative's website and a copy can be obtained at the Cooperative office or by calling 406-532-4861.

### *Sexual Harassment*

Sexual harassment of any individual is prohibited. Sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. Quid pro quo: An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or
3. "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), , or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30).

A determination of responsibility resulting from a formal complaint against an employee for engaging in sexual harassment will result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

Complaints may be submitted via the District's Title IX Grievance Procedure. Please refer to **Policies 2000 and 2005** for additional information regarding the Cooperative's prohibition against discrimination and harassment.

### *Outside Employment or Activities*

Employees may not perform any duties related to an outside job during their regular working hours.

### *Recording Students*

Member districts may use security and surveillance video cameras on district property to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to district property, and to safeguard district facilities and equipment. Public performances or athletic events (or practices or rehearsals that are public) may also be recorded by a member district. Employees may not audio or video record students outside of the security and surveillance recording done without prior parent permission.

### *Travel Procedures*

#### Travel Authorization (Out-of-Normal Work Areas):

All travel out-of-normal work areas requires prior approval by the Cooperative Director and must be associated with the conduct of Cooperative business.

#### Meals, Lodging & Transportation:

Cooperative employees shall be reimbursed for meals and lodging while away from the person's normal work assignments or outside of the normal work day when the employee is engaged in official Cooperative business in accordance with IRS guidance and the following provisions:

1. Actual cost of lodging. An original receipt that details expenditures must document all claims for the allowable lodging expense reimbursement.
2. Per Diem for allowable meals will be reimbursed per current State rates. Per Diem reimbursements are representative of the maximum allowable for any meal or series of meals. The Director may require receipts.

#### Personal Vehicle:

1. Use of personal vehicles will be reimbursed at the statutory rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service.
2. If a personal vehicle is used, Montana law does require liability insurance to demonstrate financial responsibility. Any Cooperative employee using a personally owned vehicle for Cooperative business is required to carry liability/property damage insurance.
3. The Cooperative reserves the right to require proof of insurance and a Montana driver's license for any personal vehicle used for Cooperative business.
4. Cooperative employees shall NOT transport students or other non-employee passengers in their vehicles during the work day.

#### Reimbursement Procedures:

1. Travel claims will be submitted to reflect travel from the first to the end of the month. Claims are due in the Cooperative's office no later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the following month. In the case of the 3<sup>rd</sup> falling on a holiday or a weekend, the claim is due on the prior work day before the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Travel claims are to be submitted monthly.
2. Whenever outside agencies directly reimburse an employee for travel or related costs, and when such travel or related costs were borne by the Cooperative, the employee shall be required to

reimburse the Cooperative either personally or by signing the reimbursement check over to the Cooperative Clerk within five working days after receipt of reimbursement. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary and/or legal action against the employee.

Safety Belt Policy:

In accordance with Montana law, employees are required to use seat belts at all times when driving.

Travel Conditions:

1. The Cooperative recognizes that road and weather condition may be such that employees, to protect their own safety, should not travel.
2. Employees should consider how the current weather situation would affect driving conditions.
3. Consider the severity of storm warning and Travelers' Advisories. Current information concerning road and weather conditions can be obtained through local media sources, the Montana Highway Patrol (1-800-525-5555) or by contacting the Montana Department of Transportation website: <http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/travinfo>.

Need to Travel (Urgency):

1. If you are not traveling due to adverse weather or road conditions, contact the Cooperative Director or Cooperative office as soon as possible.
2. When emergency weather conditions restrict travel and prevent the Cooperative Employee from reaching his/her workstation, the employee will not lose compensation nor any leave time provided the provisions of the travel policy are followed.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received a copy of the Employee Handbook issued by the Cooperative, and understand and agree that I am to review this handbook in detail and to consult Cooperative policies and procedures and with my supervisor if I have any questions concerning its contents.

I understand:

1. that this handbook is intended as a general guide to Cooperative personnel policies and procedures and that it is not intended to create any sort of contract between the Cooperative and any one or all of its employees;
2. that in the event there is a conflict between this Handbook and Cooperative policies and procedures, the policies and procedures will control.
3. that the Cooperative may modify any or all of these policies and procedures, in whole or in part, at any time, with or without prior notice; and
4. that in the event the Cooperative modifies any of the policies or procedures contained in this handbook, the changes will become binding on me immediately upon issuance of the new policy or procedure by the Cooperative.

*I understand that as an employee of the Cooperative I am required to review and follow the policies and procedures set forth in this Employee Handbook and I agree to do so.*

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*Signature of Employee*

*Date*

**Return this signed form to the Cooperative Office.**