**Employee Management Checklist**

The following checklist of best practices is provided to assist congregations in assessing their current employee policies and practices. If you need assistance in developing policies, changing practices or with hiring a new staff, ending the employment of a current staff member or changing their job description, communicating with the congregation or handling upset parishioners, contact the Diocesan Administrator, Mary Ann Mello ([MaryAnn@episcopalri.org](mailto:MaryAnn@episcopalri.org)) with a brief description of your need and she will refer your request to the appropriate person or committee. Compensation and Benefits Committee is available to assist with many of these matters.

We recommend that your Vestry/Bishop’s Committee or a smaller team of people review this checklist and work with the priest and wardens to address any issues that may be identified.

**HIRING**

* 1. Each employee has a job description that clearly outlines their responsibilities and makes it clear that each employee reports to the priest-in-charge.
* Job descriptions are reviewed and updated annually.
* The job posting is shared with the congregation along with the policy that no parishioner or relative of a parishioner will be considered. If you have an employee in this status, you can make it clear that they are “grandfathered” in but that future employees will not be parishioners. Include any other policies your congregation has adopted that might be relevant.
* Open positions are posted on the diocesan website, shared with neighboring faith communities and organizations and are posted on websites such as Indeed.com or the Swearer Center’s Community jobs board (<https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/special-programs/public-service-old/swearerlists/ricomjobs/post>)
* The priest identifies at least two people to assist in interviewing candidates. Ideally the priest-in-charge establishes a Personnel Committee or team to help with this and other personnel issues. That often includes one or both wardens and/or someone with HR or management experience.
* Criteria are established and applied to screen resumes and choose who will be interviewed.
* A list of interview questions is developed before the interviews and is used consistently with all candidates.
* At least three references are checked – ideally with someone who has seen the person in a similar position and lasting long enough to conduct an in-depth interview with examples of performances or concerns.
* If the applicant has worked in or is a member of another Episcopal Church, call that church’s priest; you may also want to check with the bishop’s office before proceeding just to make sure there isn’t a story known to others that might prevent you from making a mistake.
* Conduct a background check for any employee that will handle money, have keys to the property, etc.
* The new employee is given a job offer letter that outlines the salary, benefits, vacation and sick time, hours, responsibilities, etc.
* Establish and maintain a separate file for medical information (e.g., medical history, application for disability leave, return-to-work releases from health providers)
* All employees must file the W-4 form
* All employees are required to file an I-9 which is kept in a separate file (do not put this federally required form or medical files into personnel files as both are highly confidential and only a very limited number of people should have access to these files)
* All congregations should keep confidential personnel files for all clergy and lay employees. Personnel files are “discoverable”–your congregation *might* be legally required to provide personnel files if sued. Keeping complete, consistent, and well-managed personnel records–private and secure–is essential. Personnel files should include:
* Materials from the original application (resumé, cover letter, application)
* Verifications of Employment
* Job Description
* Offer Letters
* Benefits Enrollment Forms
* Tax forms (W-4, copies of W-2 and 1099’s)
* Salary History
* Annual Housing Allowance Declarations (if applicable)
* Safe Church Certificate (all employees must complete Safe Church training)
* Contact Information
* Performance Reviews
* Disciplinary Documentation

**MANAGING**

* Provide safe church training and review procedures periodically.
* Address any performance or behavioral issues early and often!
  + Identify the results you want, not necessarily how to get that result
  + Make sure employees understand your priorities
  + Make sure they understand timelines that are non-negotiable (e.g., bulletins, music and cleaning must be done before the first weekend service!)
  + Make sure employees understand your policies and procedures. These should be written, given to the employee and have them sign that they received them.
    - Policies might include things like: no drug, alcohol use on site or prior to work in a way that impairs performance; no smoking on premises, no romantic relationships with other staff or parishioners, etc.
  + Meet weekly with new employees to review how things are going. Check in regularly with experienced employees to review how things are going.
  + Remember to provide affirmation, say “thank you” and commend employees for excellence, work above and beyond the call of duty, etc.
* Offer training to address performance deficiencies.
  + E.g., [www.Lynda.com](http://www.Lynda.com) provides excellent on-line training on WORD, EXCEL and other office software programs as well as on website design and updating
  + Or identify someone in your congregation who is both proficient and able to teach someone else. Don’t forget to consider younger adults or even teens who often are very adept at website design, for example.
  + Or find a local trainer or course
* Provide specific directions about behavioral or relationship issues
  + A member of your congregation or community may be skilled in coaching someone with behavioral or relationship issues.
  + Role-playing can help someone learn new ways to respond to a difficult parishioner or ways to respond to a challenging situation
  + Be clear about behaviors that are inappropriate and unacceptable: yelling at someone (for any reason), arguing with people, throwing things, cursing, failing to complete tasks or to complete them on time, etc.
* Provide regular and specific feedback on performance and behavior
  + Provide feedback within a few hours – and make sure to include positive as well as critical feedback.
  + Take time every few weeks to review how things are going.
  + Conduct an annual performance review and place it in the employees personal file. Use this as a time to summarize the feedback given throughout the year, progress made, identify goals for the future and resources or training needed.
  + Feedback and annual reviews are done by the priest and it is usually best to have the Sr. Warden or a member of the vestry with personnel experience present, mostly as an observer. This is especially important if the priest is inexperienced at managing employees or isn’t confident in their ability to provide feedback.
  + Make sure employees have what they need to be successful – it is not fair to critique the sexton for dirty floors if you refuse to give them to tools needed to clean the floors properly!
  + Provide affirmation for excellent work, service above and beyond, etc. A bonus, gift card or other tangible form of thanks is helpful, even if it is small.
* Salaries, benefits, vacations and recordkeeping
  + Administrative staff, sexton and other non-managerial staff must keep time sheets and must be paid time and a half overtime. Timesheets must be filed for each pay period, signed by the supervisor and kept for seven years. Vacation, sick days and personal time off are recorded on the timesheets.
    - Do not let your staff person to stay beyond their hours as a “volunteer.” They can later claim you failed to pay them overtime and the penalties for that can be severe. If your staff person is a parishioner or volunteers in other aspects of church life, they need to leave the premises at the end of the work day and then return and work with another group on an unrelated project. In other words, they can’t just stay late and finish up their job-related tasks. Failure to abide by this rule is a reason for terminating someone as it puts the church at risk.
  + If you have a rare occasion when a staff person needs to put in extra hours and agrees to take compensatory time off instead of overtime pay, that comp time needs to be taken within a few days. So, if the parish administrator works extra in the week before and of Holy Week, he/she then takes the following week off and you either do without a bulletin or amend the one from last year!
  + Clergy, organists, directors of Christian education, etc. are exempt employees
    - You can apply criteria (such as “you much be an Episcopalian”) that you cannot apply to other jobs.
    - They do not need to maintain timesheets, nor do they qualify for overtime pay.
    - Clergy and lay employees who are scheduled to work a minimum of 1,500 hours annually must be offered the opportunity to enroll in the Medical Trust Health Insurance. If they are covered under another policy, they must sign a waiver indicating so.
    - All clergy are automatically enrolled in the Church Pension Fund
    - Lay employees who are scheduled to work a minimum of 1,000 hours annually must be enrolled in the Church Pension Fund.

**FIRING**

* As soon as you identify a performance or behavioral problem, create a written record.
* After you have addressed the issue once and gotten no change in behavior, provide written feedback to the employee and have them sign that they received it. Institute the remedial measures outlined above (coaching, training, role playing, etc.)
* After you have provided that initial written feedback and still see no change in behavior, issue a written warning that says that performance must change by a specific date or the employee may be terminated. At this point, notify the bishop’s office of the possibility that you may need to terminate an employee and seek advice on how to proceed. The Vice-Chancellor is an HR attorney and is available to assist you.
* If you decide you must terminate an employee, the priest does it with the Sr. Warden present. Do not discuss the matter further at this point. Simply state that their employment is terminated, explain when and how they will receive the final pay and say goodbye. You can be kind and gentle, but this is not the time to re-negotiate or argue about it. Also, provide the give reasons (which should be no surprise as you’ll have discussed that before). Rhode Island is an “at will” state but if you just say “it isn’t working out” and they sue for discrimination and you then say there were performance issues, it looks like you’re making it up to justify the firing. Remember “protected classes” includes anyone over 40, females, differently abled, LBGTQ, people of color, etc. So almost everyone fits in some protected class that could be a basis for a discrimination claim. That’s why it is important to document, provide assistance, give feedback, etc. so you have a record of what the deficiency was and what actions you took to help the person overcome it.
* If you have the time and skills, you can help an employee transition to another job.
  + Discuss their strengths: have them talk about what energizes them what they like to do, what they think their gifts are
  + Discuss what kind of work or tasks they find challenging, boring, de-energizing
  + Talk about what they like and don’t like about their current job – help them see that this job is not a good fit for them, isn’t enjoyable or doesn’t use their gifts.
  + Talk about what kinds of jobs would use their gifts and/or be more rewarding
  + Offer to support them in finding such a job and do whatever you can to make that happen.
  + If you are able to take the time and can help the employee find a new job, you don’t have to fire them. But this takes time and considerable effort -- and only works if the employee is amenable. So it is best used if you have employed a parishioner or relative of a parishioner where terminating them would cause problems in the congregation or it is a long term employee whom you don’t want to just terminate abruptly.
* Allow the person to retire or resign
  + If you have a long-term employee or parishioner and they can’t learn new skills or behaviors, you can give the person the option of retiring or resigning.
  + Have a letter of resignation ready for the employee to sign or sit and craft it with them on the spot – perhaps showing the employee two or three templates of a letter.
  + Use this method mostly when terminating the person would cause problems in the congregation and when you know the person well enough to feel you can guide him or her through this process.
* Inform the Vestry/Bishop’s Committee
  + Once the priest and wardens have decided someone’s employment needs to be terminated, discuss it with the Vestry/Bishop’s Committee, ideally before it happens. An exception to that would be if someone stole money, was abusive, showed up drunk, etc. all of which should lead to immediate termination and then call for an immediate Vestry/Bishop’s Committee meeting to inform them.
  + Make it clear that the decision is the priest’s and the role of the Vestry/Bishop’s Committee is to advise, provide perspective and, most importantly, help manage the congregation’s response. Almost every employee is beloved by some members of your congregation and they will be upset.
    - Identify who is likely to be upset and who is best able to talk with those persons.
    - Discuss how the news will be conveyed to the congregation. It is usually best to simply include a brief announcement in the newsletter that says “Mrs. Smith, our Parish Administrator, is leaving us. Her last day will be (or was). We will be starting a search for a new PA.” If people ask, keep it simple. Even if many members know there were problems and probe, don’t say much more than: “This is an HR matter so, of course, we can’t say anything about it.”
    - Hold hands and stick together! Some members of the congregation may begin to attack the priest, wardens or Vestry/Bishop’s Committee. Stay calm. Listen. Affirm that you understand that they are upset. And affirm that you can’t discuss the matter beyond saying that Mr. Jones is no longer our Parish Administrator. Do NOT allow yourself to get pulled into blaming or shaming anyone. Encourage people to be kind, understanding, gracious, etc.
    - If you have been able to encourage a parishioner or long-time employee to resign it may be appropriate to have some celebration in thanks for their service. Discuss it with the employee. We have, for example, several older Parish Administrators who are not able to master today’s complex computer requirements and choose to retire. They have served faithfully for many years and deserve the congregation’s appreciation.