



NORTH DAKOTA
NDIRF
INSURANCE
RESERVE FUND



HR: What Every County Employee Should Know

Everyday workplace expectations, employee rights, and
when to ask for help

North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund
For North Dakota Local Government
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Disclaimer

This presentation provides general guidance only and is not intended as legal advice.

Why HR matters in everyday county work



Public trust

County employees serve the public, handle public resources, and represent the county in routine interactions.



Workplace impact

Communication, attendance, documentation, and respectful conduct affect coworkers and public service.



Early action

Small issues often remain manageable when employees raise them promptly and through the right channel.



Legal obligations

Employment laws, county policies, ethics rules, and public-record requirements can overlap.

What employees should leave knowing



1

Recognize early

A workplace issue may need attention before it becomes a complaint, grievance, investigation, or claim. Employees do not need to identify the correct law before asking for help.

2

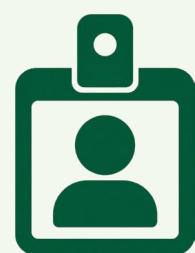
Respond well

Know what your role requires, where to report concerns, what information to preserve, and when HR, management, or legal counsel should become involved.

The goal is good judgment and early communication.

Different roles in one workplace

WHO DOES WHAT



EMPLOYEE

Follow policy, communicate, document accurately, report concerns, and participate honestly.



SUPERVISOR

Set expectations, address issues consistently, protect confidentiality, and involve HR early.



HR

Guide processes, support employees and supervisors, maintain records, and coordinate resources.



LEGAL / RISK

Advise on legal exposure, preserve rights and records, and help coordinate claims or counsel.

Basic workplace expectations

Everyday Conduct



Reliability

Arrive as scheduled, follow attendance procedures, and promptly communicate changes.



Professionalism

Treat coworkers and the public respectfully, even during disagreements or stress.



Accountability

Follow reasonable directions, clarify unclear expectations, and accept constructive feedback.



Stewardship

Use county time, property, technology and information only for authorized purposes.

Communication that holds up later

PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION



BEFORE YOU SEND

Would I say this in a meeting?

Is it accurate and necessary?

Does the correct person need this information?

Would I be comfortable if someone outside the county read it?



WHEN CONFLICT STARTS

State the facts without guessing motives.

Ask for clarification.

Use the correct chain of communication.

Move sensitive or complicated issues to an appropriate conversation.

Assume county business communications may need to be preserved

Discrimination and harassment

RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE



Protected characteristics

Federal and state law protect employees from discrimination based on specified characteristics. County policy may cover additional conduct.



Unwelcome conduct

Harassment can include verbal, visual, physical, or electronic conduct. Not every rude act is unlawful, but policy may require action before conduct meets a legal threshold.



Employee response

Use the county's reporting options, preserve relevant information, and report promptly. Employees should not investigate the matter themselves.

The county needs enough information to respond

Retaliation concerns

After someone speaks up

Protected activity

An employee may raise a discrimination concern, request an accommodation, participate in an investigation, or exercise another protected right.

Material changes

Schedule changes, exclusion, threats, heightened scrutiny, discipline, or hostility may raise concern when connected to protected activity.

What employees should do

Continue meeting job expectations, document facts, and report possible retaliation promptly through an available channel.

A complaint does not prevent legitimate management, but decisions need a sound reason

Reporting a workplace concern

SPEAK UP THROUGH THE RIGHT CHANNEL



What to Share

What happened and when
Who was involved or witnessed it
Relevant messages or records
What response or help you are requesting



What to Expect

The county should assess the concern promptly.
Information will be shared as needed to respond.
Employees may be asked to participate.
The outcome may remain partly confidential.

“Please keep this secret” may be impossible to promise.

Documentation and public records

WRITE FOR THE WORK

Document facts

Record dates, conduct, instructions, responses, and decisions. Avoid sarcasm, speculation, and unnecessary medical or personal detail.

Use county systems

Follow county retention practices and store work information where authorized employees can find and preserve it.

Preserve relevant material

Do not delete, edit, or move records to avoid disclosure or review when a concern, request, or claim arises.

Ask before releasing

Public access, confidentiality, personnel information, and legal protections require case-specific review.

Leave and workplace accommodations

HEALTH AND FAMILY NEEDS

Employees do not need the legal words

A statement such as “I need surgery,” “my condition is affecting my work,” or “I need time to care for my parent” may require follow-up.



NOTICE

Tell the appropriate supervisor or HR contact that you need leave or a workplace change.



INFORMATION

Provide requested information through the proper process, not to every coworker.



COORDINATION

Stay in contact about status, restrictions, return-to-work needs, and changes.

Medical information should be handled carefully

Hours worked and accurate timekeeping

WAGE AND HOUR BASICS

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Record all time worked accurately.

Follow approval procedures for overtime or schedule changes.

Report missed meal periods or off-the-clock work.

Do not alter another employee's time record.



IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

An employer may address unauthorized overtime through its policies, but generally must still pay a nonexempt employee for work the employer knew or should have known occurred.

Accurate records protect the employee and the county

Public employment has added layers

COUNTY WORKPLACE

Authority

County boards, elected officials, department heads, supervisors, and policies may divide decision-making authority.

Constitutional protections

Public employees may have speech, due-process, or other constitutional interests depending on the facts.

Open government

County records and governing-body meetings operate under public-access requirements and statutory exceptions.

Politics and public service

Employees should follow applicable policies and laws governing political activity, use of public resources, and conflicts.

Ethics, conflicts, and county resources

PUBLIC TRUST

Disclose conflicts

Raise personal, financial, or family interests that could affect, or appear to affect, county work.

Do not self-manage the conflict

Disclosure allows the county to decide whether recusal, reassignment, documentation, or another step is appropriate.

Protect public resources

County equipment, information, purchasing authority, and work time must be used for authorized purposes.

When in doubt, disclose early and ask

What happens after a report

INVESTIGATIONS

1

TRIAGE

What is alleged, who needs to know, and is immediate action necessary?

2

PLAN

Who will investigate, what records matter, and who should be interviewed?

3

GATHER

Collect information fairly and give involved employees an opportunity to respond.

4

DECIDE

Assess the facts, apply policy, communicate what can be shared, and take appropriate action.

Scenario 1: The frustrated email

DISCUSSION

An employee sends a sarcastic email about a supervisor to several coworkers. Two weeks later, the county receives an open-records request that may include the message.

What should have happened before the email was sent?

Should the employee delete it now?

Who decides whether it must be produced?

What workplace issue still needs attention?

Scenario 2: “I need surgery”

DISCUSSION

An employee tells a supervisor, “I need surgery next month and may be out for a while.” The supervisor responds, “Use vacation and let me know when you’re back.”

What did the employee communicate?

What follow-up should occur?

Who needs the medical information?

What if the employee has not used the words “FMLA” or “accommodation”?

Scenario 3: “Don’t tell anyone”

DISCUSSION

An employee reports repeated age-related jokes but says, “I just needed to vent. Please do not tell anyone or do anything.”

Can the county promise complete confidentiality?

What facts should be documented?

What response may be necessary?

How can the county protect the employee from retaliation?

Quick calls: What would you do?

AUDIENCE DISCUSSION

A coworker posts about a county dispute on Facebook

Policy, speech, records, and workplace impact may overlap.

An employee cries during a performance meeting

Pause if needed, but do not assume a medical condition or abandon the process.

A commissioner asks an employee for a complaint file

Confirm authority and route the request through the proper records and legal process.

A supervisor shares an employee's restriction with the team

Share only what coworkers need to carry out work, not unnecessary medical information.

Five habits that prevent bigger problems

TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Ask when expectations are unclear
- 2 Communicate early and professionally
- 3 Record time and workplace facts accurately
- 4 Report concerns through an available channel
- 5 Preserve information and involve the right people





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