**Personnel**

**Handbook**

 

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**COTTONWOOD**

INCORPORATED

Revised 4/2021

## COTTONWOOD, INCORPORATED

## Personnel Handbook

**WELCOME TO COTTONWOOD, INC.!!!**

Cottonwood, Inc. was incorporated in 1969 as a Kansas 501© (3) not-for-profit corporation. Its mission is to help individuals with disabilities shape their own futures. Services offered by Cottonwood include: Employment, Work, Residential, Life Enrichment, Case Management, and Retirement. Additional services are available through outreach and affiliate agreements with a network of service providers.

Cottonwood is licensed by the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services. A 21-member Board of Trustees governs the organization. Cottonwood is the “single point of contact” for eligibility and entry for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities seeking services in Douglas and Jefferson Counties.

Good employees are the most valuable asset of our organization. Cottonwood, Inc. takes a personal interest in both your accomplishments and problems. This Personnel Handbook has been prepared to answer some of your questions about your employment, and to explain certain procedures which all of us are expected to follow.

This Handbook attempts to cover the information you will need to know to get you started with your new job. During orientation, you will receive additional information about Cottonwood, its history and current service delivery. If you have any questions, feel free to ask your supervisor. He or she will be responsible for guiding you, and will be anxious to help you become proficient in your job.

As an important member of the Cottonwood, Inc. organization, you will enjoy certain benefits. At the same time, you have certain responsibilities to the organization.

This Handbook is intended to be a source of general information on company benefits, policies, and procedures. Please read it carefully. Specific questions regarding particular issues should be directed to your supervisor. This Handbook is neither complete nor guaranteed to be current as policies and procedures change from time to time. You are responsible to ensure that you are acting upon current policy and procedures at all times. Check with your coordinator or director for current policies and procedures if you have questions.

The provisions of this Personnel Handbook are not intended to constitute an express or implied contract of employment, nor are they covenants. **Employment with Cottonwood is at-will and may be terminated at any time by you or Cottonwood without prior notice, with or without cause.** Cottonwood retains the sole right in its business judgment to modify, suspend, interpret, or cancel, in whole or in part, at any time, and with or without any notice, any of its published or unpublished policies, procedures, or practices. The only policy that will remain unchanged is its employment-at-will policy, allowing any active employee or Cottonwood to terminate employment with Cottonwood at any time for any or no reason. No oral statements or representations can change the provisions of this Handbook. If you believe any provisions of the Handbook conflict with your understanding of the terms or conditions of your employment, you should immediately speak to your supervisor for clarification. If you do not request assistance, it will be assumed you fully understand the Handbook. Likewise, if you have any suggestions related to Cottonwood’s policies or procedures, please let your supervisor know.

We wish you success in your employment with Cottonwood!

**EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

It has been, and will continue to be, the policy of Cottonwood, Inc. to be an EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER. This facility reaffirms its intent to comply with federal, state, and local laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination in all efforts to recruit, hire, train, schedule, promote, demote, discipline, and terminate employees in all job levels on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, citizenship, national origin, political affiliation, ancestry, disability (mental or physical), or any other basis prohibited by law. Similarly, all other personnel matters such as compensation, benefits, advertising, transfers, reductions in force, and social and recreational programs will continue to be administered in accordance with this policy. All employment decisions must be based on job-related standards and must comply with the principles of equal employment opportunity.

Diversity is considered a value in our organization. Because we are a government contractor, we have an official Affirmative Action Plan (AAP), and willingly comply with the gathering and reporting of all the statistics asked for by our Plan, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Department of Labor (DOL), Executive Orders, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). The AAP is revised annually, and is available for review by appointment with the Human Resources Director.

At Cottonwood, Inc. there is no place for discrimination or harassment in any form by the organization against any person, or by any person against another. Cottonwood, Inc. will not tolerate verbal or physical conduct by any employee, which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. The work environment is not limited to Cottonwood owned, leased, or rented premises; it also includes company functions, business travel, and other work- related activities. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual’s sex, race, color, genetic information, national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual advances, or visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of offensive behavior including gender-based harassment of a person of the same sex as the harasser.

Cottonwood is a drug-free, weapon-free employer; see Policy #02-029. Each employee has a responsibility to maintain the work place free of any form of discrimination, drugs, weapons, or harassment. Any violation of any part of this policy is grounds for employee discipline up to and including termination. For more information, see Policy #03-025, "Harassment," and follow the procedures listed there. Every report of discrimination and/or harassment will be investigated. All staff are expected to cooperate fully and truthfully with any investigation – to the very best of their ability. Employees can report **any** activity without fear of reprisal or retaliation. Also, see Policy #03-050 regarding drug and alcohol testing. All employees will be orientated to the Drug Testing Policy and will be required to sign a receipt for a copy of it.

**IMMIGRATION LAW COMPLIANCE**

Cottonwood is committed to employing only United States citizens and aliens who are authorized to work in the United States, and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin.

In compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (as amended), each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9, and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the reverification on the form.

Employees may raise questions about immigration law compliance without fear of reprisal or retaliation.

**Cottonwood, Inc. Code of Ethical Conduct (Key Components)**

This Code of Ethical Conduct embodies certain standards of conduct for Cottonwood, Inc. including staff members and Board of Trustees members as the work of the organization is carried out daily. In abiding by this code, it is understood that staff and board members view their obligations in as wide a context as the situation requires, taking all the principles into consideration and choosing a course of action consistent with the spirit and intent by which they were created.

**T** Ishall promote inclusion and equitable **TREATMENT** for all people.

**H** Ishall be **HONEST** in all communication and marketing endeavors internally and externally.

**U** I shall do my **UTMOST** to inform and advocate for the individuals served.

**M** Ishall provide **MISSION**-based supports and services with integrity, compassion and respect

 for all individual differences and choices as a member of a well-trained, competent, and diverse staff.

**B** I shall adhere to professional **BOUNDARIES, act with integrity** and promote excellence for all staff.

**S** Ishall serve as a responsible **STEWARD** for public and private funds, committed to the highest

 standards of conduct in all business and fiscal relationships.

**U** I shall **UNITE** with individuals to promote choice, inclusion, growth, and development.

**P** I shall respect the **PRIVACY** and confidentiality of persons served.

These concepts are woven throughout Cottonwood’s policies, job descriptions, corporate compliance plan, marketing, fiscal management, strategic planning, staff training, board orientation, and performance reviews. They should be evident in all interactions with individuals served, co-workers, families, funders, and the public.

If you become aware of any possible violations of the Code of Ethical Conduct, you should discuss it with your immediate supervisor, the Director of Human Resources, (785-840-1627) or another member of the Management Team.

You need to fully understand that violation of the Code of Ethical Conduct may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**THE MISSION OF COTTONWOOD**

**We Help People With Disabilities Shape Their Own Futures.**

**THE CORE VALUES OF COTTONWOOD**

Our organization is founded upon certain shared beliefs and values which are an expression of our mission and shape our decisions and actions.

**Consumer Satisfaction**

 We value the provision of services which satisfies the needs and desires of the people we support.

**Self Determination and Personal Growth**

 We recognize and support each individual’s right to make choices, take reasonable risks, and experience the

 natural process of learning. We encourage this growth to take place in the most integrated and least restrictive

 environments.

**Teamwork**

We accept the individual and shared responsibilities of our positions and support the efforts of our associates.

**Community Partnerships**

 We share with the larger community the responsibility to include all individuals in community life and share the

 benefits resulting from the partnership.

**Courtesy and Respect**

 We respect the rights, abilities, and dignity of all individuals.

**Support**

 We value the support from all who contribute to the success of our mission.

**COTTONWOOD EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT**

 I will be punctual and focused at work, bringing as much energy and intelligence as possible to my job every day. I am dedicated to remaining educated regarding the products and services of Cottonwood and our industry as a whole. I will keep personal interference with my job functions to a minimum. I will constantly seek to improve Cottonwood and myself. I will set goals and follow them as closely as possible. I will communicate openly with my supervisors and co-workers. I will work with the utmost integrity and respect and will follow and implement the mission and ethics statements of Cottonwood and my department.

**DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS**

Cottonwood is committed to complying fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), and ensuring Equal Opportunity Employment for qualified persons with disabilities. All employment practices, activities, and decisions are conducted in a non-discriminatory way.

Qualified individuals with disabilities are entitled to equal pay and other forms of compensation (or changes in compensation), in all job assignments, classifications, organizational structures, position descriptions, lines of progression, and seniority lists. Leaves of all types will be available to all employees on an equal basis.

Cottonwood is also committed to not discriminate against any qualified employees or applicants because they are related to or associated with a person with a disability, see Policy # 03-021. Cottonwood will follow any state or local laws that provide individuals with disabilities greater protection than the ADA or ADAAA.

This policy is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. Cottonwood is committed to taking other reasonable actions as necessary to ensure equal employment opportunity for persons with disabilities in accordance with the ADA, ADAAA, and all other applicable federal, state, or local laws.

# EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS

Cottonwood relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the Application for Employment, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in the exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, termination of employment. Likewise, incomplete or illegible applications will not be considered.

# REPORTING OF WASTE, FRAUD, ILLEGAL OR UNETHICAL ACTIVITY

Cottonwood, Inc. is committed to providing quality services and practicing ethical fiscal stewardship. To that end, Cottonwood promotes a zero tolerance for waste, fraud, illegal, or unethical activity. Applicable laws are described in Cottonwood Policy #04-008 and Cottonwood’s specific policies are described in Cottonwood Policy #04-032. Employees are encouraged to ask questions and seek information from management staff about troubling or confusing practices so that a framework exists to help guide them in their decisions. Should an employee suspect that significant or gross waste, fraud, or illegal and unethical activity has occurred, or that a false claim has been made, he/she must report it to the Compliance Officer, who is the Human Resources Director for Cottonwood, or another member of management. Cottonwood affirms the right of its employees to be protected from discharge, demotion, suspension, threat, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation in the event the employee files a claim pursuant to the Federal False Claims Act or otherwise makes a good faith report alleging fraud, waste, or abuse in a federal healthcare program, including Medicare and KMAP to Cottonwood or to the appropriate authorities. See Cottonwood Policies #04-008 and 04-032 available on the intranet.

**EMPLOYMENT AT WILL**

It is the policy of Cottonwood, Inc. to employ staff on an Employment-at-Will basis. This means that you or Cottonwood can terminate your employment for any reason or no reason at all, at any time, following procedures in Policies 03-027 and 03-028. You are legally protected from termination on the basis of discrimination. Cottonwood does not hire staff contractually. Nothing in this Handbook, other paperwork, or verbal comments by any staff person, shall alter this “Employment at Will” policy. Cottonwood does not guarantee employment for any specific length of time. Employees can be terminated at any time, with or without cause.

**DRIVER ELIGIBILITY**

For most of Cottonwood's staff positions, a valid driver's license and a driving record acceptable to Cottonwood's insurance carrier are mandatory. If you have been hired for one of these positions, you must authorize us to print your Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) from the Motor Vehicle Department Website.

Additionally, your driving record must remain acceptable throughout your employment at Cottonwood. All moving violations, regardless of vehicle (Cottonwood's, or even your private vehicle), are considered by the insurance carrier in monitoring on-going eligibility. You are required to notify your supervisor immediately if you receive a citation. A conviction or diversion related to a drug/alcohol violation triggers the loss of insurance coverage by Cottonwood’s insurance company. If you lose eligibility, termination of employment will result if yours is a position that requires you to drive.

Finally, employees wishing or needing to transport consumers in their private vehicles must provide proof of adequate insurance coverage as required.

For further information, see your supervisor or review Cottonwood Policy #02-009.

**EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS**

It is the intent of Cottonwood to clarify the definitions of employment classifications so that employees understand their employment status and benefit eligibility. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period of time. Accordingly, the right to terminate the employment relationship at-will, at any time is retained by both the employee and Cottonwood.

Each employee is designated as either NON-EXEMPT or EXEMPT from federal and state wage and hour laws. NON-EXEMPT employees are entitled to overtime pay under specific provisions of federal and state laws. EXEMPT employees are excluded from specific provisions of federal and state laws. An employee’s EXEMPT or NON-EXEMPT classification may be changed only upon written notification by Cottonwood’s management.

In addition to the above categories, each employee will belong to one other employment category:

1. Full-time Employment: Those employees who are scheduled to work the full standard workweek. Full-time employees will be eligible for benefits in accordance with Policies #03-018, 03-019, 03-020 and 03-021.

2. Part-time Employment with Benefits: Those employees, who are scheduled to work at least 780 hours a year, but less than full time, will be placed in a part-time-with-benefits classification. They will be eligible for vacation, sick leave and holiday pay on a pro-rata basis. To be eligible for this classification, the employee must work hours in each quarter of the year. See policies listed in number 1 above.

3. Part-time Employment without Benefits: Those employees who work intermittently, and/or less than 780 hours a year, will be placed in this classification, and will not be eligible for any benefits.

4. Production: Those workers who are hired to meet increased production demands. Production workers are subject to reduction in force during times of decreased production demands. Production workers are a distinct category of employees and are not expected to provide first aid to consumers or to intervene in behavioral situations.

5. Ability One Production: This is a subcategory of Production for Participants in the Ability One program where preference is given to individuals with disabilities. Eligibility for this category depends on the nature and extent of the disability and how it affects a person in the work setting. The Fair Labor Standards Act will be used to determine applicable pay practices.

6. Temporary Employment without Benefits: Those employees who are hired for a specific period or for a specific temporary position will be placed in this classification, and will not be eligible for any benefits.

Payroll cutoff for most employees is midnight on the third Saturday of each calendar month, and timesheets must be turned in to your supervisor by noon the following Monday. Payday is the last working day of each month. Cottonwood uses direct deposit to your designated financial institution. You will be given access to a paystub electronically each month on the last working day.

W–2 Forms will be mailed or distributed no later than January 31 each year.

**JOB POSTINGS**

Cottonwood provides employees an opportunity to indicate their interest in open positions and advance within the organization according to their skills and experience. Notices of all open positions are posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway of Building 1. Each posting will include the dates of the posting period, job title, department, and qualifications. All jobs are posted for a minimum of 3 calendar days. A job description is also posted or available from the Receptionist.

To be eligible to apply for a posted job, employees must have performed competently in their current position for nine months. Employees who have written warnings or are on probation or suspension are not eligible to apply for posted jobs. Eligible employees can only apply for those posted jobs for which they possess the required skills, competencies, and qualifications.

Job posting is a way to inform employees of openings and to identify qualified and interested applicants who might not otherwise be known to the hiring supervisor. Internal candidates who move to a new position will maintain their status with regard to benefits (subject to possible reclassification as described above). Other recruiting sources may also be used to fill open positions in the best interest of Cottonwood.

To apply for an open position, employees should complete an Internal Posting Request form and submit to the Human Resources Department.

**JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

Cottonwood makes every effort to create and maintain accurate job descriptions for all positions within the organization. Each description includes the department name, job title, job summary, qualifications, supervision received and given, EXEMPT or NON-EXEMPT status, job responsibilities, essential functions, signature area, and the disclaimer that the job description does not constitute an employment contract.

The Department Director and Coordinator prepare job descriptions when new positions are created. Existing descriptions are reviewed and may be revised at least annually, to ensure they describe the job as it is currently, reflecting the work being done. Employees should remember that job descriptions do not necessarily cover every task or duty that might be assigned, and that additional responsibilities may be assigned as necessary. Employees should visit with their supervisor any time they have any questions or concerns about their job descriptions.

# ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

As a responsible member of the Cottonwood, Inc. staff, we expect you to be dependable... that means having a good attendance record and always being punctual. If you are absent or tardy on too many occasions, disciplinary action up to and including termination will result. You must telephone your supervisor promptly and state the specific reason for the absence or tardiness. IT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE TO LEAVE A VOICE MAIL MESSAGE, OR A MESSAGE WITH ANOTHER EMPLOYEE, OR HAVE SOMEONE ELSE CALL IN FOR YOU. YOU MUST SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR or designated alternate. If you cannot contact your supervisor (or alternate) after several tries, you must leave a call back number on your supervisor’s voice mail, where you can be reached.

If at any time during a shift you must leave, always inform your supervisor before doing so. You may **not** leave until you are relieved from duty. Provide as much advance notice as possible regarding absences, tardiness, or necessary appointments.

**JOB ABANDONMENT**

If an employee fails to show up for work or personally call in to his/her supervisor with a reason for his/her absence for a period of three consecutive days, he/she will be considered to have abandoned his/her job and voluntarily terminated his/her employment. If you are incapacitated and cannot personally call in initially, you should have someone call your supervisor for you. Staff on approved leaves of absence (including military leave) and/or FMLA are excluded from this policy.

**OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT**

An employee may hold a job with another employer as long as he/she satisfactorily performs his/her job responsibilities and follows Cottonwood’s policies and procedures. All employees will be judged by the same performance standards and will be subject to Cottonwood’s scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside work requirements.

If Cottonwood determines that an employee’s outside work interferes with the performance or the ability to meet the requirements of Cottonwood as they are modified from time to time, the employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment if he/she wishes to remain with Cottonwood. In addition, your outside-of-Cottonwood activities should not be detrimental to the image, reputation, or interests of Cottonwood.

Outside employment will present a conflict of interest if it has an adverse impact on Cottonwood.

**PERSONAL APPEARANCE**

Dress, grooming, and personal cleanliness contribute to the morale of all employees and affect the business image Cottonwood presents to consumers, families, customers, and visitors.

During their work periods or whenever representing Cottonwood, employees are expected to present a clean, neat, and tasteful appearance. Employees should be dressed and groomed according to the requirements of their position and the Cottonwood Dress Code.

If it is determined by the supervisor or a member of management that an employee’s personal appearance is inappropriate, the employee will be asked to leave the workplace until he/she is properly dressed or groomed. Under such circumstances, an employee will not be compensated for the time away from work. Consult your supervisor if you have questions as to what constitutes appropriate appearance.

# NON DISCLOSURE, NON COMPETE

Employees are prohibited from bringing to Cottonwood records, files, documents, or equipment that belongs to a former employer without the express written permission of that former employer. Cottonwood relies on you to not divulge proprietary information or trade secrets of any former employer or business partner.

During your employment with Cottonwood you will become aware of confidential information related to the business of the organization. Examples of such information include financial information, caseload issues, litigation, business and product information not available for public release, personnel information, etc. Such information is the property of Cottonwood, Inc., and you must agree to hold the information in trust and solely for the benefit of Cottonwood.

You may not disclose such information to others either during or after employment with Cottonwood, Inc. without the written consent of Cottonwood. If you are uncertain about the confidential nature of a particular piece of information, please ask your supervisor or the director of your department for clarification.

**NON-SOLICITATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

All employees are required to sign an agreement of non-solicitation, which states that during their employment and for one year afterwards, employees agree to **not** solicit any person in the employ of Cottonwood or any person served in any capacity by Cottonwood, or solicit any potential Clients if those Clients were identified through contacts developed or information received during the course of employment at Cottonwood, nor divert or attempt to divert any other person or entity or any existing business of Cottonwood within Douglas and/or Jefferson Counties, away from Cottonwood. The agreement is simply stating that anyone is welcome to start his/her own business or go to work for another organization, but by signing this agreement, he/she agrees to not take or entice any of Cottonwood’s staff or consumers to go with him/her.

This agreement also addresses data, manuals, notes, writings, Client documentation, other documentation, including all copies and duplicates, notes and any other material created by staff during the course of his/her employment, are Cottonwood property and must be left with Cottonwood at the end of employment.

# RECORDING TIME WORKED

Non-Exempt employees will have an electronic time sheet to be completed daily and released monthly to their supervisor. The time sheet must show **exactly** the time worked each day. The supervisor will check time sheets before submitting to Payroll.

All employees’ paychecks are deposited the last working day of every month into the account they have designated. Any time an employee has questions about his/her pay, he/she should speak with his/her coordinator.

# WORKING OVERTIME

All working hours in excess of 40 hours in a workweek are computed at one and one-half (1 1/2) times the regular rate of pay for non-exempt employees (exception is salaried non-exempt employees who agree to be paid on a fixed salary for a fluctuating workweek). If the hours worked during the week were at different rates of pay, overtime pay will be based on the blended rate. All overtime must be authorized in advance by your coordinator and/or director. Your supervisor will explain your work schedule to you.

**ADMINISTRATIVE CORRECTIONS**

Cottonwood takes all reasonable steps to ensure that employees receive the correct amount of pay in each paycheck and that employees are paid promptly on the scheduled payday.

In the unlikely event that there is an error in the amount of pay, the employee should promptly bring the discrepancy to

the attention of his/her supervisor so that any errors may be corrected as soon as possible.

**SOCIAL SECURITY**

Because employees at Cottonwood, Inc. are covered by Social Security, we are required to withhold such taxes from each employee's paycheck. For every amount contributed by you as an employee, Cottonwood, Inc. contributes an equal amount to your Social Security Account. You will find your deduction under the "FICA” classification on your paycheck stub.

**WORKER COMPENSATION**

As an employee of Cottonwood, Inc. you are protected under the provisions of the Kansas Worker's Compensation Law. This coverage is funded by a private insurance carrier, for which premiums are fully paid by Cottonwood, Inc. For a work-related injury, you may be eligible for compensation for medical care, hospital services, and some lost wages.

Should a work-related injury or illness occur on the job, your immediate supervisor needs to be notified as quickly as possible and paperwork **must** be completed. If medical treatment is needed, Cottonwood has designated the Workplace Wellness Center (WWC) at Lawrence Memorial Hospital (LMH, 325 Maine) as the medical provider for **all** work-related injuries. If medical treatment is needed after hours, weekends, or holidays, go to the LMH Emergency Room. At either place, make sure it is understood you are there because of a “work-related” incident.

In order to return to work following such an incident, you must bring the LMH “Work Status Report” you received from BHC to your supervisor. We will work closely with the WWC physician to ensure that you can return as quickly as possible to full duty or to modified duty that may be appropriate to accommodate your injury.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION AND DATA CHANGES**

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify Human Resources of any changes in personal data. Turn in a Personnel Action Request (PAR) form to your supervisor promptly indicating any change in your name, home address, telephone number, email address, cell phone number, or emergency contact. Emergencies may arise when such information may be of the utmost importance to you, your family, and Cottonwood. Also, Cottonwood needs this information to mail your COBRA Notice, W-2 Form, and other important information to you.

**PRIVACY OF EMPLOYEE INFORMATION**

All employee records are the property of Cottonwood, Inc. and will be released only as required by law. Cottonwood will not give out your home address or telephone number, and all employees receiving such a request are responsible to refer such calls to the telephone book or take a message. Current staff may review the contents of their own file by making arrangements with the Human Resources Director. See Policy #04-024.

**RECORDING DEVICES AND PHOTOGRAPHS**

It is the policy of Cottonwood to prohibit the use of recording devices on company property without permission. The purpose is to protect the privacy of all consumers and employees, and to ensure the security of confidential business information. The recording of conversations, meetings, or other interactions violates the spirit of trust in the workplace. Making such a recording without the knowledge of those recorded may be illegal, and any employee who does so will be subject to disciplinary action. If you have a legitimate reason to record any audio or video at Cottonwood, you must first request permission and receive approval from the CEO. Approval will be granted on a case-by-case basis only, and may be revoked at any time. It is prohibited to take photographs of consumers for any other purpose than recreational or social events where there is not an expectation of privacy and where permission is granted by the consumer. It is prohibited to take photographs of any Cottonwood, Inc documents or property.

**HEALTH AND LIFE INSURANCE**

It can be discouraging and disheartening for a family to be burdened by a succession of bills for hospitalization and medical services. To assist you in covering these unforeseen expenses, we have group plans which provide benefits for hospital, doctor, surgery, prescription, dental, and vision expenses. Disability and life insurance coverage are also provided. Supplemental life, health, and cancer plans are also available through payroll deduction.

Medical insurance benefits are available to all employees working at least 24 hours a week, beginning on the first of the month following sixty (60) days of employment. Cottonwood will pay 100% of the premiums for individual coverage for employees scheduled to work 30 or more hours per week, and most of the premium for individuals who are scheduled to work an average of 24 to no more than 30 hours per week. See the Human Resources Director for more information. Insurance benefits and premiums are subject to change annually, based on group usage. Cottonwood’s “Open Enrollment” period is the last two weeks of November annually.

# KANSAS PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM (KPERS)

Cottonwood is a KPERS-covered employer and participation in KPERS is required for all eligible employees. Eligible staff scheduled to work 20 or more hours per week are in KPERS-covered positions and will be contributing members, and are also covered with the KPERS life and disability insurance. Optional group life is available through payroll deduction. Please see Policy 03-048 for additional and specific details.

Cottonwood offers another qualified retirement vehicle (KPERS 457 plan) available to staff on a payroll deduction basis. Employees are able to participate with no waiting period. Anyone interested may seek information from the Human Resources Director.

**HOLIDAYS**

The official holidays observed by Cottonwood, Inc. include:

 New Year's Day (January 1st)

 Martin Luther King's Birthday (Monday on or following January 15)

 Spring Break (Friday before Easter)

 Memorial Day (Last Monday in May)

 Independence Day (July 4th)

 Labor Day (First Monday in September)

 Thanksgiving (4th Thursday and Friday in November)

 Christmas Day (December 25th)

 Discretionary Day (to be determined by the employee)

Full-time employees will receive their regular rate of pay for each holiday. Part-time employees with benefits will receive holiday pay only for holidays on which they would normally be scheduled to work, and only for their regularly scheduled number of hours. Part-time employees without benefits and temporary employees are not eligible to receive holiday pay.

To receive holiday pay, an otherwise eligible employee must be at work or on an authorized absence on the work days immediately preceding and immediately following the day on which the holiday is observed. If you are required to work on the holiday, you will receive holiday pay in addition to your regular pay. Since Residential services are provided 365 days per year, there are additional scheduling requirements for Residential staff that impact holiday pay. Residential staff, talk to your coordinator about the current practice (the procedures could be subject to change).

If a holiday falls on a Saturday, it will be observed the day before. If it falls on a Sunday, it will be observed the day after. This policy is in effect for all employees, unless the employee is regularly scheduled to work on an actual holiday, in which case he/she will observe the holiday on the actual holiday. See Policy #03-019.

**ABSENCE POLICIES**

There are two basic types of absences at Cottonwood: leaves of absence with pay and leaves of absence without pay. Employees must request leave according to the guidelines found in Policies #03-021 and #03-022, (see appendix). Requests are made by completing a Personnel Action Request (PAR) form and submitting it to one’s supervisor.

In nearly all cases (including most of FMLA and all Military leaves), leave with pay must be used prior to leave without pay being granted.

**VACATION**

**Year 1:** Beginning on the first of the month following 90 days of employment, one day of vacation will be awarded every other month for the duration of the first year. At the end of the twelfth full month of employment, five additional days of vacation will be awarded. Part-time-with-benefits employees will receive a prorated amount. These ten vacation days must be used by the end of the 24th month or the unused hours will be forfeited.

**Years 2-4:** At the end of the 24th, 36th, and 48th months of continuous employment, a total annual benefit of two weeks (prorated for part-time employees) will be given and must be used prior to the next employment anniversary.

**Years 5-9:** After 5 years of continuous employment, the annual benefit will be three weeks (proportional for part-time employees).

Years 10+: After 10 years of continuous employment, the annual benefit will be four weeks (proportional for part-time employees).

Administrators and Directors – please refer to Policy #03-020.

Each employee must complete a Personnel Action Request (PAR) one month prior to wanting to use vacation benefit, and submit this to his/her supervisor and Program Coordinator/Director for approval. Cottonwood, Inc. does not guarantee its ability to accommodate every employee's request for a vacation at a particular time.

At Cottonwood, we believe that vacations are beneficial to you, and encourage you to use the vacation benefits you earn. Vacation days do not accumulate. You will not be paid for unused vacation benefit remaining at the end of your anniversary year.

**SICK LEAVE BENEFIT**

Sick leave is accrued at the rate of one day per month (prorated for those who work less than 40 hours per week), beginning after the first full calendar month of employment. Sick leave can be accumulated up to 90 days. See Cottonwood Policy #03-021 for information on how to request sick leave with pay, as well as Sick Time Conversion (subject to Board approval). Changes in the average number of hours scheduled to work each week will alter the accrual rate. Cottonwood also has a Sick Leave Sharing Program. If interested, see Cottonwood Policy # 03-049.

**MILITARY LEAVE**

A military leave of absence will be granted to employees who are absent from work because of service in the U. S. Uniformed Services in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Advance notice of military service is required, unless military necessity prevents such notice or it is otherwise impossible or unreasonable. The leave will be unpaid. Employees may use any available paid time off for the absence. Benefit accruals, such as vacation, sick leave, KPERS (if participating), or holiday benefits, will be suspended during the leave and will resume upon the employee’s return to active employment. See Policy 03-022 for additional information about military leave, including returning after the leave, and job reinstatement.

**FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)**

Employees who have worked for Cottonwood, Inc. for one year, and 1,250 hours in the last 12 months, are eligible for FMLA leave. FMLA provides eligible employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in each rolling 12-month period for the birth and care of a newborn child, for placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care, or for serious illness of the employee or of the employee’s child, spouse, or parent. Taking of the leave may be denied if requirements are not met. To be eligible for FMLA leave, the employee must report the qualifying event to his or her supervisor and the Human Resources Director, and necessary documentation must be completed. Upon notification of a FMLA request, Human Resources will provide the requesting employee all applicable forms and discuss procedures, certification requirements, etc. The employee must ordinarily provide 30 days advance notice when leave is foreseeable. Most leaves under FMLA require using paid leave prior to leave without pay – see Policy # 03-043 for specific details. During approved leave, Cottonwood, Inc. will maintain existing health coverage under its group health plan, and the leave will not result in the loss of any employee benefit. See Cottonwood Policy #03-043 for important details.

In the event the employee does not provide advance notice for FMLA leave, Cottonwood will allow an employee no more than 3 days, commencing from the first day the employee does not report to work, to submit the required FMLA notice. In the event notice is not given within 3 days, the company will assume the employee has abandoned his/her duties and termination of employment is automatic. If the written notice is received within the 3 days, FMLA leave, if approved, will be considered effective the first day the employee did not report to work.

Effective 1/28/08, the National Defense Authorization Act adds the following two new qualifying events to FMLA:

1. Service Member Caregiver Leave – up to 26 weeks of leave during a one time 12-month period.
2. Service Member Family Leave – up to 12 weeks of leave during any 12-month period.

Any time taken under these new categories is counted toward the employee’s total allotment of FMLA leave. The original FMLA rules and regulations remain in effect regarding who is qualified, eligibility, notice requirements, requesting leave, certifications, serious health conditions, paid and unpaid leave, employee status and benefits during and after leave, return from leave, failure to return from leave, and the “rolling” 12 month calculations.

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Cottonwood, Inc. realizes that you will be more effective and productive when you have had adequate personal training and encouragement to acquire greater skills and knowledge. Your supervisor will help you understand what is expected of you, and will assist you in fully using your talents and abilities.

Cottonwood will provide training in such areas as CPR, First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens, Orientation to Developmental Disability Services, Teamwork, Respectful Interactions~~,~~ and dealing with Challenging Behaviors. Other optional training will be offered as well. Cottonwood will compensate you for these training hours at your regular hourly rate. You are encouraged to discuss with your supervisor any problems you may have with respect to training. In addition, case managers are required by regulation and CDDO area procedures to complete hours of training in areas specific to their work.

Additional online training for Direct Support Professionals (DSP’s) is available after the initial orientation training is completed. The College of Direct Support (CDS) suggested lessons are available from your supervisor. CDS training is voluntary and unpaid; however, there is a wage adjustment upon completion.

**CONSUMER/STAFF RELATIONS**

At all times, consumers will be treated with dignity and respect. Employees will follow closely those principles that Cottonwood has incorporated into agency philosophy. Consumers will be treated in a manner that is as normal for their age and culture as possible. This includes all aspects of their lives (including gender, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs, socioeconomic status, culture, and language), at work and leisure. Employees should not try to protect individuals from the problems they will encounter in life, but rather assist them in dealing appropriately with these situations. It is important to treat each person as an individual who has different needs and desires. Each person's strengths should be emphasized and developed to the fullest extent possible and support given to address areas of need. Abuse in any form including corporal punishment, humiliating, frightening, or exploiting interactions is prohibited. Abuse may result in immediate termination.

Remember, the Mission of Cottonwood is to **help** people with disabilities shape their own future.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSUMER INFORMATION**

As a valued employee of Cottonwood, Inc. you will have access to sensitive information about the individuals that we serve. This may include the names of individuals who are consumers here, their families, events in their lives, the amount of their paychecks and countless other pieces of information that must remain confidential. All Cottonwood employees are required to maintain in confidence all information regarding the individuals we serve and their families. This is a legal requirement for which you could be held personally accountable. You will receive training during orientation about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) which further explains our privacy rules. In other words, what happens and what you may see or read or hear at work will stay at work, unless a release, provided by the individual or guardian, frees you to share the information. Confidential information may be discussed with Cottonwood staff members directly involved in the delivery of services to the consumer’s health. Information may be shared with persons or entities that have authorization to obtain private health information as defined in Cottonwood’s HIPAA policy and privacy notice. Health information may be shared between providers for the purpose of treatment, payment, or operations. Such information should be shared on a “need to know” basis with only the pertinent information necessary to accomplish treatment, payment, or operations. Any violation of confidentiality policies or procedures may result in disciplinary action. To help you ensure your excellent performance in this area, see Policy #05-028.

**CONSUMER PROTECTION**

As an employee of Cottonwood, you have a legal responsibility to minimize risk to consumers while ensuring independence and informed choice, and to report any suspected abuse or neglect. The policy regarding Protection from Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation (05-036) is included in the appendix.

**SAFETY**

Cottonwood, Inc. expects a mutual investment on the part of its employees in maintaining all of Cottonwood’s properties in accordance with Cottonwood policies and licensing regulations. Upon the discovery of a health and/or safety hazard, ALL STAFF are responsible to immediately take action to rectify the situation. If you are unable to rectify the situation alone, you are responsible to seek help and follow up until the environment is restored or management personnel have accepted responsibility. Safety of consumers and others is of utmost importance. It may be considered neglectful to allow an unsafe situation to go unaddressed. Cottonwood tracks all accidents, injuries, and near-miss incidents to evaluate workplace safety, so all must be reported **immediately** to your supervisor.

**CARE OF PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT**

Cottonwood, Inc. is invested in providing a safe, comfortable, and pleasant environment for consumers and staff. All staff are expected to assist in maintaining the surroundings according to Cottonwood policies and Licensing/Accreditation standards. The assets of Cottonwood are intended to be used in a way that benefits our organization. Employees must preserve these assets and use them wisely. To protect the physical and intellectual property of Cottonwood from loss, damage, theft, vandalism, unauthorized use, copying, disclosure, or disposal, we must ensure proper business use and limited personal use (see Policy 03-039) of company property and facilities.

**BUILDING SECURITY AND KEYS/FOBS**

Building security is of prime concern at Cottonwood, and keys/fobs are issued on a long-term basis to supervisory personnel only. Certain areas may be restricted based on classification of employment. Keys/fobs are not to be given or loaned to any non-employee. All keys/fobs will remain the property of Cottonwood, Inc. and will be returned by holder to management immediately when the key/fob is no longer needed or upon termination. You may be expected to replace lost keys/fobs at your own expense.

**ELECTRONIC WORKPLACE**

Cottonwood has a Computer Internet and E-Mail use Policy #02-024 that you signed off on during your initial orientation. In addition, in all forms of communication, employees are prohibited from making disparaging statements in electronic communications, emails, or blogs, against Cottonwood, other employees, consumers, consumer families, customers, or competitors, either by name or implication. Employees are cautioned that they must avoid creating the impression that the views expressed on a blog are anything more than personal opinion, and do not represent the views or beliefs of Cottonwood.

**WORKPLACE ETIQUETTE**

Cottonwood strives to maintain a positive work environment where employees treat each other with respect and courtesy. Sometimes issues arise when employees are unaware that their behavior in the workplace may be disruptive or annoying to others. Many of these day-to-day issues can be addressed by politely speaking with a co-worker to bring the perceived problem to his/her attention. In most cases, common sense will dictate an appropriate resolution. Cottonwood encourages all employees to keep an open mind and graciously accept constructive feedback or a request to change behavior that may be affecting another employee’s ability to concentrate and be productive.

The following workplace etiquette guidelines are not necessarily intended to be strict rules with disciplinary consequences. They are simply suggestions for appropriate workplace behavior to help everyone be more conscientious and considerate of co-workers and the work environment. Please contact your supervisor or Human Resources if you have comments, concerns, or suggestions regarding these workplace etiquette guidelines.

Replace paper in the copy machine, fax, and printer trays when they are empty.

 Retrieve print jobs in a timely manner and collect all your pages.

 When possible, duplex your copies to save paper.

 Keep the area around the copy machine and printers orderly and picked up.

 Be careful not to take or discard others’ print jobs or faxes when collecting your own.

 Try to minimize unscheduled interruptions of other employees while they are working.

 Be conscious of how your voice travels, and try to lower your voice when walking down the hallway, talking on

 the phone, or to others in open areas.

 Refrain from using inappropriate language.

 It is prohibited to use scented candles, incense, and highly scented cosmetics.

 Avoid discussions of personal issues in public conversations that can be easily overheard.

 Monitor the volume when listening to music, voicemail, or a speakerphone that others can hear.

Clean up after yourself and do not leave waste or discarded papers behind for others to deal with.

Please move hallway meetings into your office or some other unused available room.

Always fill the gas tank of a Cottonwood vehicle you have used when the gauge gets down to one-fourth tank.

The consumers’ home is their home and not yours. Any shared space (such as offices) must be kept clean and

 well-organized.

When speaking to someone in an office, step inside the office instead of staying in the hallway and loudly

carrying on the conversation.

**THINGS CONSIDERED IN EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS**

Performance evaluations are conducted on the anniversary of your initial hire or promotion date. Evaluation forms will reflect your actual job description. Some, or many, of the following general factors may be used by your supervisor to evaluate your performance:

 Reliability:

 \* attends work regularly

 \* observes work hours

 \* works accurately

 \* carries assignments to completion

 \* performs work neatly

\* requires a minimum of checking

\* keeps supervisor informed

 Work Habits:

 \* completes work on schedule

 \* produces acceptable amount of work

 \* requires minimum assistance from fellow workers

 Adaptability:

 \* works well under pressure

 \* adjusts to changes in methods and procedures

 \* handles problems well

 \* reacts well in emergencies

 \* accepts supervision

 Job Knowledge:

 \* knows all techniques and phases of primary assignment

 \* requires minimum instructions on new assignments

Behavior and Interpersonal Relations:

 \* shows interest in the job

 \* makes conscientious use of time

 \* presents a good appearance/credit to the company

 \* assists other employees willingly when necessary

 \* accepts suggestions for improvement readily

 \* shows courtesy and tact in dealing with all people

 \* has a keen interest in consumers’ needs

Self-Reliance and Initiative

 \* works well independently

 \* requires a minimum of supervision

 \* arrives at sound decisions without assistance

 \* performs worthwhile projects independently

 \* accepts responsibility for errors made

**REPORTING CONCERNS/GRIEVANCES**

Cottonwood is committed to providing the best possible working conditions for all employees. Part of this commitment is encouraging an open and frank atmosphere in which any problem, concern, or question can be addressed and discussed. Employees should be aware of the communication channels available to them and how to use them when questions or concerns arise. See Policy 03-026.

If there is a work-related concern, complaint, or grievance, employees should discuss the matter first with their supervisor. Supervisors will exert great effort to informally resolve any work-related questions or concerns. They have the responsibility and authority to listen, evaluate, investigate, and respond objectively.

If an employee is uncomfortable discussing an issue with his/her supervisor, see the Human Resources Director.

**CREDIT/EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATIONS**

All employment verifications, credit checks, and calls for reference checks must be directed to the Human Resources Director. Personal data will not be released on staff without a written and signed release from the staff, but dates of employment, position title, hours per week scheduled, and wage rates (if applicable) will be. Letters of reference are not given to staff upon termination – information will be provided to prospective employers’ pursuant to K.S.A 44-119a

**DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINES**

In any organization, standards for performance, rules of conduct, and other policies which describe appropriate behavior for employees must be defined and enforced. When an employee's behavior or performance does not follow these established guidelines, Cottonwood, Inc. has the responsibility to take appropriate action to correct the situation.

Discipline is intended to encourage an employee who has demonstrated unacceptable performance or misconduct to improve his or her performance or conduct to an acceptable level. Cottonwood maintains an OPEN-DOOR policy for employees. If you find a situation or condition to be a problem, you are encouraged to discuss it with your supervisor. If you don’t feel the situation was satisfactorily resolved by your supervisor, you should discuss the matter with your department director and/or the Human Resources Director. You can do yourself a huge favor by being pro active in this regard, rather than waiting until the problem escalates to the point of being too late to resolve.

Cottonwood does not guarantee a progressive discipline procedure. In certain cases involving violations of Cottonwood Policies, an employee may be subject to immediate dismissal. See Policy #03-024 included in the appendix, or your supervisor, for specific information regarding employee discipline. In all cases of employee discipline, see Policy #03-026, Employee Grievance & Appeal.

Nothing in this section changes the at-will nature of the employment relationship.

**SEPARATIONS**

Resignations: To be considered terminated in good standing, employees shall provide a minimum of two weeks written notice of resignation to their immediate supervisor. Administrators, directors, coordinators, nurses, residential

supervisors II and residential managers are required to give at least thirty days notice of resignation (see Policy #03-027). If proper notice was given, and all scheduled hours between resignation and termination are worked, pay for all accrued but unused vacation will be granted. The final paycheck will be deposited on the next regular payday.

The written resignation must be submitted on a Personnel Action Request (PAR) form, noting the projected last day of work. An exit interview will be conducted by the immediate supervisor, if possible. If you have been in our medical insurance group immediately prior to quitting, a COBRA notice will be mailed to you at the end of the month, outlining the procedures to follow to continue the insurance coverage by paying the premiums yourself.

Quitting without proper notice is considered to be a violation of Cottonwood Policy, and the employee who quits in this manner will carry an unfavorable termination report in his/her personnel file. Employees who quit without giving proper notice or who are terminated for cause will not be eligible for rehire or for termination benefits of unused vacation. Employees who believe they have been given an unfavorable termination report unfairly should utilize the grievance procedure.

Cottonwood’s contribution on behalf of an employee for all group insurance plans ceases upon the last day of “on duty” employment (contribution does not continue through the time period for which unused vacation or other severance pay is paid, or for the period of time between the last day of “on duty” work and pay day).

**GRIEVANCE AND APPEAL**

All employees have the right to file and pursue job-related grievances. A grievance procedure is outlined in Policy

#03-026.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

You are encouraged to ask questions. It is important for you to understand the reasoning and meaning behind policies and procedures and directives. We encourage you to ask questions of your immediate supervisor, coordinator, director and/or Human Resources. A complete listing and description of all of the policies are located on the Cottonwood intranet home page at <http://www.intranet.cwood.org/>. Job-specific questions are best asked of your supervisor, but for other questions you could ask anyone following the “chain of command” as shown on our Organizational Chart. Depending on the question, you might use caution when seeking advice from coworkers, because they may not be familiar enough with our policies and procedures to adequately advise you, unless they are assigned by your supervisor to be your mentor.

APPENDIX

Leave of Absence with Pay 03-021

Leave of Absence without Pay 03-022

Employee Discipline 03-024

Protection from Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation 05-036

### RECEIPT

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Cottonwood Personnel Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to read the Handbook thoroughly, to review the policies outlined in the Cottonwood home page intranet site, and ask questions about anything I do not fully understand. I agree to be bound by the policies, procedures, and rules contained in the Handbook as they are amended from time-to-time.

I understand that:

1. The Handbook is prepared for informational purposes only and does not constitute a contract of employment between Cottonwood and its employees, and shall not be considered as such;
2. The policies and information contained in the Handbook may be changed or

amended at any time by Cottonwood, with or without notice. I am responsible to verify that I am acting according to the most current policies; and

1. Only the Cottonwood Board of Trustees has the authority to enter into any

agreement for employment for any specified period of time or make any binding

representations or agreements inconsistent with this Handbook.

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Employee’s Signature

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Date

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Printed name

This signed receipt will be placed in the employee’s file.