

This article presents general guidelines for Ohio nonprofit organizations as of the date written and should not be construed as legal advice. Always consult an attorney to address your particular situation.

Key Considerations for Employee Handbooks

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Why Have an Employee Handbook?

The purpose of an employee handbook is to outline the rights and responsibilities of the employee in the employment relationship. Employee handbooks are advantageous because they establish employer expectations, educate employees about personnel policies, foster consistency in the administration of policies, and improve employer defenses to any number of workplace situations.

Employee handbooks are particularly helpful in nonprofit settings because non-profit organization supervisors (and supervisors in general for that matter) sometimes have difficulty disciplining employees or providing negative performance feedback. Having an employee handbook, however, makes it easier to do the difficult human resources work.

I have an Employee Handbook...now what?

Employee handbooks are a great tool to establish consistency in workplace. However, they only work if employees and managers know what the policies are and effectively enforce them.

Here are some best practices for use of employee handbooks:

- Distribute them to all employees and make sure employees sign the acknowledgement page.
 - This is important to verify that employees have actually received the handbook.
 - This is also useful should an employment dispute arise -- the signature makes clear that employees received the policies.
- Train employees on the policies in the handbook.
 - Employees should know what is expected of them, and managers should know what their responsibilities are to the employees.

- An organization can have the best handbook in the world, but if no one reads or follows it, it is useless.
- Training can be paired with rolling out the handbook, and then conducted on an annual basis. If training is on multiple topics, it can be broken out into smaller trainings throughout the year.
- Some training should be for all employees, and some should be manager specific (e.g. – how to handle discrimination complaints, accommodation requests, etc.).
- Keep the handbook current.
 - Laws change all the time. Although you may not be able to do a total overhaul every time there is a minor change, handbooks should be reviewed annually to evaluate whether policies need updating. Also, some pieces of major legislation may require “off cycle” updates.

I don't have an Employee Handbook...now what?

If your organization does not have an employee handbook, it is time to consider developing one. Even if you have only 1 paid employee, having an employee handbook in place can be beneficial to your organization because even with 1 employee, it is still important to set employer and employee expectations. And, employee handbooks don't have to be long and complicated. An employment attorney can help draft a handbook that is tailored to fit your organization's size, structure, and needs.

If you are a client and would like to discuss your organization's use of a current handbook, developing a handbook, or if you have related questions, please contact us at info@pbpohio.org.

If you are not a client but would like to apply, please contact us at info@pbpohio.org.