

# Charles County Government Equal Employment Opportunity Plan Short Form

## **Step 1: Introductory Information**

Grant Title: Various Grants

Grant Number: Varies

Address: Charles County Government  
P.O. Box 2150  
La Plata, MD 20646

Contact Person: Alexis B. Blackwell, Department of Human Resources  
(301) 645-0585

Date and effective duration of EEOP: February 21, 2021 – February 21, 2023

This report includes statistical data for County-administered departments. It also includes the Charles County Sheriff's Office, State's Attorney's Office, Circuit Court, some employees of the Department of Social Services, some employees of Charles County Soil Conservation, one employee from Resource Conservation and Development, Johnson Grass (a contractor), and two employees from the Health Department. Charles County only administers payroll for these agencies and individuals and does not manage or administer the human resources functions, including recruitment, for the agencies or individuals.

## **Policy Statement**

In accordance with the Personnel Policy & Procedures Manual, Chapters 2 and 7 (Attachment A), Charles County Government is committed to an Equal Employment Opportunity policy, has taken and will continue to take actions to promote this policy. Public accountability requires that equal opportunity, diversity, equity, and inclusion be the standard. Equal opportunity employment practices support the best of government ideals. The following is confirmation of this commitment. Charles County Government shall recruit, hire, train, and promote people without discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, and any other non-merit factor or any other legally protected status under federal, state, or local laws.

Charles County Government continues to use an Applicant Tracking System to: compile and analyze applicant demographics and data; track the progress of County Government; and target recruitment efforts. Charles County Government targets recruitment efforts toward underrepresented categories in certain fields to ensure they have the opportunity to apply for County Government positions. Charles County Government continues to identify and remove any potential barriers or practices that may be discriminatory in intent or effect. The goal of Charles County Government's Equal Employment Opportunity Plan is to achieve a workforce that is reflective of the County's external labor force while complying with federal and state equal employment opportunity laws and guidelines.

This Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Utilization Report will be reviewed and updated once every two years to reflect changes in federal and/or state laws, as well as the changing demographics of Charles County. All employees of Charles County Government have the right to review this Plan, a copy of which will be maintained in the Department of Human Resources. While statistical data for the Charles County Sheriff's Office and other external agencies is included in this report, Charles County Government does not administer recruitment or hiring practices for the Sheriff's Office or other agencies. To that end, Charles County Government has obtained input from the Charles County Sherriff's Office to address underutilization in protective services.

I attest this information is complete and accurate.



Alexis B. Blackwell  
Director of Human Resources

7/23/24  
Date

#### **Step 4b: Narrative Underutilization Analysis**

In reviewing the Utilization Analysis Chart, the following observations were made by the Human Resources Department for Charles County Government.

##### **Officials/Administrators:**

Underutilization is consistent across all groups in this category with utilization of Black or African American, Two or More Races, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian men and women at -5%, -3%, -2% and -1% respectively. Although the underutilization of White women has declined since 2021, significant underutilization is noted at -9% for this period.

##### **Professionals:**

Hispanic or Latino, Two or More Races, Black or African American and Asian men and women are underutilized in this category ranging -1% to -2%. In addition, significant underutilization of Black or African American women is noted at -6% for this period.

##### **Technicians:**

Significant underutilization of Black or African American women remains at -14% since 2021 while the underutilization of Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native and Asian women is noted at -2% and -1% respectively for the same period. Underutilization increased for Hispanic or Latino men to -7% in 2023 over -3% in 2021 but improved for Black or African American men to 1% in 2023 from -3% in 2021.

##### **Protective Services—Sworn and Non-Sworn Personnel:**

###### **Sworn**

Underutilization of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino men increased to -12% in 2023 from -9% in 2021, and -4% in 2023 from 1% in 2021, respectively. Conversely, utilization remains positive for White and Asian men at 15% and 2% respectively. Underutilization of White women declined slightly from -3% in 2021 to -2% in 2023 while significant underutilization of Black or African American women improved to 0% in 2023 from -13% in 2021. Utilization of Hispanic or Latino women remains consistent at 1% since 2021.

###### **Non-Sworn**

White men are now utilized at 22% in this category, a significant improvement over 2021 at -62%. Utilization of Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian men is noted at 4% and 1% respectively while significant underutilization is noted for American Indian or Alaska Native and men of Two or More Races at -9% and -8% respectively. White and Hispanic or Latino women are utilized at 10% and 1% respectively while Black or African American women are significantly underutilized at -23% for this period.

### **Administrative Support:**

White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian and men of Two or More Races are underutilized in this category at -10%, -9%, -2%, and -1% respectively with a slight improvement noted for White men, at -17% in 2021. Underutilization of Black or African American, Asian and women of Two or More Races is -10%, -2% and -1% respectively, with utilization of Black or African American women decreasing from 3% in 2021. Utilization of White women improved, at 37% in 2023 over 23% in 2021.

### **Skilled Craft:**

For this period, Hispanic or Latino and White men are underutilized at -11% and -8% respectively. Conversely, the utilization of Black or African American men increased to 19% in 2023 over 18% in 2021. Underutilization of Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American and Asian women is -1% while White women are utilized at 3%.

### **Service Maintenance:**

Utilization is significant for Black or American and White men, at 21% and 7% respectively, with an improvement noted for White men, at -3% in 2021; conversely, Hispanic or Latino, Asian and men of Two or More Races are underutilized at -5%, -2% and -1% respectively. White, Hispanic or Latino, Asian and women of Two or More Races are underutilized at -16%, and -3% respectively. Notably, significant underutilization decreased for White women, at -23% in 2021 and -16% in 2023 while underutilization increased for women of Two or More Races, at -1% in 2021 and -3% in 2023. Utilization of Black or African American remains positive in 2023 at 5%.

### **Steps 5 & 6: Objectives and Steps to Achieve the Objectives**

Charles County Government will continue to target recruitment efforts towards groups with specific persons of color and female member representation, such as trade and union organizations, Business & Professional Women, the American Association of University Women, and the Commission for Women. Creative recruitment efforts can help bring more women into non-traditional careers, such as in skilled craft and service maintenance. Such efforts have and will continue to include recruitment in local high schools and colleges. Charles County Government continues to work on succession planning to provide greater opportunities for current employees to transition to leadership roles. Through the Leadership Academy supervisory training program and ongoing training, the County assists employees with the preparation that is necessary for transition.

Additional recruitment efforts have focused on expanding online activities, in an attempt to reach a more diverse group. The County continues to explore advertising possibilities on websites targeted to specific underrepresented groups in addition to expanding use of sourcing features within the current ATS system, NeoGov. The County has also maintained relationships with several colleges and universities in the Washington Metropolitan Area and increased outreach to organizations that assist military veterans. These efforts will assist in increasing the diversity of candidates in terms of race, gender, and age.

While Charles County Government provides some funding for the Charles County Sheriff's Office, the Sheriff's Office has its own separate Human Resources and Recruitment offices. The Sheriff's Office conducts its own recruitment and manages its own Human Resources function; Charles County Government only administers the payroll and benefits for the Sheriff's Office and may not make recommendations or influence hiring or recruitment practices for the Charles County Sheriff's Office.

**Objectives:**

It is our objective to increase the representation of all groups identified as underutilized in this report across the County.

**Steps to Achieve the Objectives:**

Charles County Government is committed to making its workforce reflect the relevant available community workforce to ensure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, and any other non-merit factor or any other legally protected status under federal, state, or local laws. The information below summarizes the specific steps to assist Charles County Government in reaching this goal. These steps mirror those of the previous report in that we continue to use these efforts to achieve our goals.

\*Charles County Government continues to target recruitment efforts at specific populations, through advertisements on minority and other websites. Such targeted recruitment will occur for all professional positions, within budgetary constraints.

\*Charles County Government continues to direct recruitment efforts at minority organizations and associations, including specific professional associations.

\*Charles County Government continues to identify, contact, and advertise open positions in African American and Hispanic media broadcasts and publications with allowable time frames, budget permitting. These are the two groups in Charles County with the most rapidly growing representation in the community labor force.

\*Charles County Government continues to have diverse interview panels for recruiting.

\*Charles County Government continues to explore methods for advertising geared towards military personnel. Such efforts continue to open new avenues of recruitment and enable the County to reach more expansive candidate pools.

\*Charles County Government continues to engage social media to attract the best diverse pool of candidates.

\*The Department of Human Resources continues to provide technical assistance to hiring departments throughout the recruitment process on legal and EEO issues.

\*Charles County Government continues to develop contacts and intensify the County's presence in minority communities by working with established groups and attending events, including job and recruitment fairs, budget and health/safety precautions permitting.

\*The Department of Human Resources continues to administer a Summer Intern Program (when funded) to hire high school and college students, providing opportunities to more candidates.

\*The Department of Human Resources continues to review and update periodically the County's recruitment methods, practices, and policies to promote equal opportunity through recruitment efforts.

\*Charles County Government continues to enhance upward mobility of all employees and assure that opportunities for advancement are equally distributed while encouraging minority participation.

\*Charles County Government continues to offer a Tuition Reimbursement Program for full-time County employees to assist in paying college tuition, budget funding permitting. Furthering their education may help some internal candidates become better qualified for promotions.

### **Step 7a: Internal Dissemination**

\*Charles County Government includes information about equal employment opportunities in the Personnel Policy & Procedures Manual, which is distributed to all employees and is available to all employees on the County's internal website. This information outlines the County's commitment to equal employment opportunities and the County's recruitment efforts.

\*Equal Employment Opportunity information is posted at each reporting site in Charles County Government.

\*Internal training for all employees of Charles County Government outlines the County's zero-tolerance policy on discrimination.

\*Charles County Government will post the EEO Utilization Report on its internal website, which is accessible to all employees.

\*The Department of Human Resources will notify employees when the EEO Utilization Report is available on the internal website and from the Department of Human Resources upon request.

### **Step 7b: External Dissemination**

\*Charles County Government includes an Equal Employment Opportunity statement on its website, Job's page, and position announcements.

\*Charles County Government includes an Equal Employment Opportunity statement on its online Application for Employment.

\* Charles County Government includes an Equal Employment Opportunity statement on its public presentations to the Board of Charles County Commissioners.

\*Charles County Government advertises all jobs externally, except in limited circumstances to provide promotional opportunities. Diversity in the applicant pool is a part of the established criteria when deciding whether to advertise internally.

\*The Department of Human Resources will post the EEO Utilization Report on the Charles County Government external website, which is available to anyone.

\*Copies of the EEO Utilization Report are available upon request in the Department of Human Resources.

## **Attachment A—Chapters 2 and 7, Personnel Policy & Procedures Manual**

### **Chapter 2: WORKPLACE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

#### **Policy**

No employee or official of Charles County Government will discriminate in hiring, firing, promotion, training, discipline, terms and conditions of employment, or any personnel transaction for or against any person on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, any other non-merit factor or any other legally protected status under federal, state or local laws. Discrimination in any form or harassment will not be tolerated in the workplace. Compliance with this policy will be a factor considered in the appraisal of employee performance. This policy applies to all employees of Charles County Government during their scheduled work hours, including during their lunch breaks, and any time employees are off-site when they are representing Charles County Government in an official capacity. Charles County Government is an Equal Opportunity employer and complies with Equal Employment Opportunity and the Americans with Disabilities Act laws, as well as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) and Article 20-602 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

#### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

The Department of Human Resources will manage equal employment opportunity compliance for the offices, agencies, departments, and divisions covered by this manual. This will include collecting and maintaining required demographic statistics and periodic reporting. Department Heads and other County officials will be responsible for complying with and promoting equal employment opportunities at Charles County Government. County workforce demographic statistics will be evaluated and strategies developed to encourage a diverse workforce.

#### **Diversity Statement**

Charles County Government is committed to the principle of equal employment opportunity. It is the County's policy to recruit, train, promote, and make all employment decisions without regard to race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, genetic identity, or other improper considerations in accordance with applicable laws.

The County has expanded, and will continue to expand, its recruitment activities, reaching out to ensure it is inclusive of potential minority and female applicants. Charles County Government will take action to recruit qualified minority and female applicants to ensure our workforce mirrors the constituency it serves.

This Diversity Statement is designed to guide the County's employment decisions.

#### **Respectful Workplace Culture (Preventing and Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Hostile Work Environment, Bullying, Retaliation and Violence)**

Charles County is committed to maintaining a respectful work environment where all employees work

free from discrimination and harassment in any form. Intimidating, coercive and disruptive behaviors contribute to an unpleasant, unhealthy work environment, work errors, employee dissatisfaction, increased the cost of health care and cause good employees to seek new positions in a more professional setting.

**Discrimination, harassment and/or violence in any form in Charles County is unacceptable, potentially illegal and will not be tolerated.**

Discrimination and harassment is misconduct that is subject to appropriate corrective action, up to and including termination of employment. False and malicious complaints of discrimination and harassment may also be subject to appropriate corrective action. However, an employee will not be disciplined merely because a complaint is found to be without merit.

This policy applies to the conduct of all employees, including all members of the Executive Leadership Team and any other persons who come in contact with Charles County employees and other covered individuals in the workplace.

Charles County has identified five general categories of conduct that constitute employee harassment:

**1. Sexual Harassment**

Unwelcome sexual advances, direct or indirect demands for sexual favors, sexual comments, gestures or physical actions of a sexual nature toward another employee of the same or opposite sex will be considered sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; or
- Submission or rejection of such conduct by an employee is used as a basis for an employment decision; or
- Conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating or offensive work environment.

Conduct constituting sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome verbal, physical or visual conduct of a sexual nature; "kidding," "teasing," or "jokes" of a sexual nature; repeated offensive activities; physical conduct such as touching, patting, pinching, sexual gestures, or brushing against another person's body; or the unwelcome display of objects or pictures which are sexual in nature and which create an offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature or welcome social relationships. Courteous, respectful, non-coercive interactions between employees that are acceptable to and welcomed by both parties, is not considered to be harassment, including sexual harassment.

Anyone who believes that they have been sexually harassed should unequivocally direct the harasser to stop the behavior and immediately notify their supervisor/Department Director or the Human Resources Department. You never, however, have to report the harassment to the person(s) whom you believe is harassing you.



## **2. Hostile Work Environment Harassment**

Unwelcome conduct that has the effect of threatening, intimidating or coercing another person; and/or verbal taunting including, but not limited to, racial or ethnic slurs or comments based on an individual's race, sex, age, religion, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability including need for reasonable accommodation, or any other legally protected characteristics that is so severe, pervasive or persistent that it interferes with an individual's job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Such harassment may be committed by a person of the same protected group as the individual who is the target of the conduct or comments.

## **3. Bullying Harassment**

Workplace bullying occurs when one or more individuals (supervisors or peers) repeatedly misuse or abuse power or the perception of control over another individual. Such behavior may be verbal, psychological and/or physical and is intended to humiliate, intimidate or degrade another individual.

Bullying in the workplace may take multiple forms, but is not limited to excessive or unfounded criticism, profanity, social isolation of another individual, blame without factual justification, treating another individual differently than other individuals in the work group, reluctance or refusal to answer questions, exhibiting uncooperative attitudes during routine activities, use of condescending language or voice intonation, speaking loudly to or making jokes about another individual.

**Remember, we are all on the same team. That means we always support and assist each other every day.**

Bullying does not include reasonable and legitimate actions of a supervisor in managing an employee's performance, workload, or other duties. When direction, correction or assistance of a fellow employee is necessary, it must always be done with respect, positive intention and goodwill. Anything less is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

## **4. Retaliation**

Charles County prohibits any form of retaliation. Charles County does not condone retaliation against any individual for making a report of discrimination or harassment in good faith under this Policy or for participating in an investigation into a complaint under this Policy. Acts of retaliation must be reported immediately. All complaints will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality to the maximum extent possible.

Any individual who it is determined has engaged in conduct constituting retaliation in any form, against another individual for making a good faith report of discrimination or harassment will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination of employment.

## **5. Violence in the Workplace**

Nothing is more important to Charles County Government than the safety and security of its employees and the residents they serve. Threats, threatening behavior, verbal assaults, intimidation, or acts of violence against employees, visitors, guests or other individuals by anyone on Charles County Government property or while conducting business for Charles County Government will not be

tolerated. Violations of this policy by County employees will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The Safety Officer and the Building Security Officer will assess safety and security issues within the workplace and develop programs and train employees on techniques to improve safety and security.

During the course of employment with the County, no employee will:

1. Threaten, verbally abuse, intimidate, or commit any violent act against another person or employee.
2. Intentionally or maliciously damage or destroy the property of Charles County Government, another person or employees.
3. Bring weapons of any kind onto Charles County property except tools that are common to the employee's trade. Weapons include guns, knives, explosives, and any other items designed to inflict bodily harm.

### **Reporting a Violent Act or Situation**

An employee who has witnessed a violent act in a County workplace or at a County worksite or has knowledge of facts causing the employee to reasonably believe a violent situation is present in a County workplace or at a County worksite, will immediately call 911 and then report the act or situation to their immediate supervisor, the Security Officer, Department Director, or the Director of Human Resources (or designee).

Failure by County employees to report violent acts or threatening behavior may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Recommendations: Recommendations and suggestions from employees for improving security and reducing the risk of violence in the workplace or worksite are encouraged and should be forwarded to their respective Department Director, the Safety Officer, or the Director of Human Resources.

### **Domestic Violence**

Charles County Government strives to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all employees while they are working. There may be some situations where domestic abuse in an employee's home carries over into their workplace and affects work performance. Sometimes the abuse escalates, and co-workers may also be threatened or harmed. A supervisor who suspects an employee is experiencing some form of domestic abuse may make referrals to appropriate confidential counseling services. If any employee has a safety concern that stems from a domestic abuse situation, they may seek assistance from their supervisor or Department Director, the Safety Officer or the Department of Human Resources.

### **Procedure for Reporting and Investigation of all forms of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation.**

Any individual who believes that they have been harassed should immediately direct the harasser to stop the behavior.

Any individual who believes that they have been discriminated, harassed, or retaliated against in any form in connection with their employment at Charles County Government should bring the matter to

the immediate attention of their Department's Director.

The sooner the individual brings the concern to Charles County's attention, the sooner Charles County can take action. An individual is **never** required to bring a complaint to the attention of the individual(s) whom they believe is subjecting them to discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation.

An individual who is uncomfortable for any reason bringing the matter to the attention of the harasser or to their Department's Director (including an individual who feels one or more members of their department's management team is the harasser), may report their concern to the attention of the Human Resources Department. An individual never has to bring the complaint to the attention of the individual(s) believed to be involved in the discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation.

All reports will be kept as confidential as possible while recognizing that some disclosure may be necessary for the purpose of investigation and corrective action.

Any employee who feels they have been discriminated against, or who is dissatisfied with the action the Department Director has taken to eliminate the harassment, may file a formal grievance in accordance with the Charles County Grievance Procedures. (See Chapter 11)

Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the Department of Human Resources, but may file a complaint in writing to:

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights  
6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 900  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202  
(410) 767-8600 or 1-800-637-6247

Or

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission  
10 South Howard Street, 3rd Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201  
(410) 962-3932

### **Fraternization Policy**

"Fraternization" is a term traditionally used to identify personal relationships which violate customary bounds in a professional setting. It is separate and distinct from sexual harassment. Charles County neither prohibits nor encourages dating or social relationships between employees. However, employees are cautioned not to allow fraternization to negatively affect their job performance. This fraternization policy recognizes the need to prevent use of an organizational position, supervisory or otherwise, in such a way where it results in (or gives the appearance of) favoritism, preferential treatment, personal gain, or involves actions which otherwise breach the Charles County mission or values statement. Apparent or actual loss of objectivity may result in a perception that an employee is no longer capable or willing to exercise fairness or make judgments on the basis of merit.

While the senior party in a relationship is expected to control and preclude the development of fraternization, this policy is applicable to both members, and both are accountable for their own conduct. Fraternization is a gender-neutral concept.

Employees who fail to comply will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Charles County reserves the right to make decisions in the best interest of the organization.

### **Ethics**

The Charles County Code of Ethics (Ethics Law) is set forth in Chapter 170 of the Charles County Code. The provisions of the Ethics Law apply to all County officials and employees. The Ethics Law prohibits certain conflicts of interest and other activities of County officials and employees. The Ethics Law is administered by an independent five (5) member Ethics Commission which is authorized to issue Advisory Opinions, conduct investigations and hearings concerning Ethics Law violations and grant exemptions from the provisions of the Ethics Law under certain conditions. The County Attorney is the legal advisor to the Ethics Commission and copies of the Ethics Law may be obtained from the Office of the County Attorney.

### **Whistleblower Policy**

No employee who in good faith reports what the employee reasonably believes to be (i) a violation of law, (ii) gross mismanagement, (iii) gross waste of funds, (iv) abuse of authority, or (v) a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety will be subject to adverse employment action, including but not limited to, harassment, demotion, or firing.

*Definition:* Employee – Solely for purposes of this subsection, an employee shall be defined as any person who is employed by the Charles County Government in a full-time, full-time reduced hour, part-time, appointed, contract, or temporary capacity.

*Open Door Policy:* If an employee reasonably believes that some policy, practice or activity is (i) a violation of law, (ii) gross mismanagement, (iii) gross waste of funds, (iv) abuse of authority, or (v) a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, the employee should share their questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints with someone who may be able to address them properly. If the concerns are not addressed, the individual should make a formal disclosure as outlined in this subsection.

*Procedure:* Employees may file, within sixty (60) days of learning of a qualifying incident as defined by this policy, a written disclosure with the County Administrator or the County Attorney. The disclosure should include the person(s) involved in the incident(s) and title(s); when the incident occurred; where, how, how long, and how often the incident(s) occurred; how the employee knows of the incident(s); and whether anyone else knows of the incident(s). Disclosures must be based upon reliable firsthand information and cannot be based upon secondhand information or speculation.

If the employee is not able to write out the report, another employee may assist by taking a statement from the employee, including a description of the incident.

Each disclosure will be reviewed by the County Administrator and/or the County Attorney. If the County Administrator and/or the County Attorney determine that there is a substantial likelihood that a violation has occurred, then the County Administrator or the County Attorney will conduct a further inquiry into the matter or will refer the matter to the appropriate Department Head or any other entity the County Administrator and/or the County Attorney deem appropriate. In the event the disclosure alleges a violation of law, the County Administrator will consult with the County Attorney's Office before making any referral.

If the County Administrator and/or the County Attorney determine that there is a substantial likelihood

that a violation has occurred then, unless notification would interfere with a valid law enforcement investigation or proceeding, the County Administrator and/or the County Attorney will notify the complaining employee within thirty days that an inquiry into the disclosure has been initiated. The employee will also be notified of the resolution of the disclosure. Excluded from this notification is any information considered to be confidential personnel information or information that would interfere with a valid law enforcement investigation or proceeding.

Unless notification would interfere with a valid law enforcement investigation or proceeding, the County Administrator and/or the County Attorney will notify the County Commissioners of the resolution of any complainant sustained under this subsection.

*Confidentiality:* The County encourages anyone making a disclosure to identify him or herself when making a report in order to facilitate the investigation. However, reports may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant or may be submitted anonymously. The County will explore anonymous allegations to the extent possible but will weigh the prudence of continuing such inquiries against the likelihood of confirming the alleged facts or circumstances from attributable sources.

Disclosures made pursuant to this policy will be kept confidential to the extent possible. Confidentiality of the individual making the disclosure will be balanced against the need to conduct an adequate investigation, comply with all applicable laws, and cooperate with law enforcement authorities. Employees making disclosures may be called upon to give testimony in administrative or judicial proceedings.

*Good Faith:* This policy is based on employees acting in good faith to report concerns they reasonably believe are true.

Any employee who makes allegations with a reckless disregard for the truth, maliciously knowing that the allegations are false is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

*Reprisal Prohibited:* Any employee who has been found to act in a retaliatory nature against an employee who filed a complaint may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

*Exceptions:* All exceptions to this policy/procedure must be approved in advance with the approval and authority of the County Administrator and the County Attorney.

## **Chapter 7: RECRUITMENT**

### **Policy**

It is the policy of Charles County Government to recruit and select the most qualified persons for positions in the County's service. Recruitment will be conducted in an affirmative manner to ensure open competition for all positions, provide Equal Employment Opportunity, and to prohibit discrimination because of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, or any other non-merit factor. The Department of Human Resources will periodically review recruitment processes to ensure equal application to candidates and assure screening criteria is applicable to the job.

The Department of Human Resources will collaborate with departments on the recruitment process but is authorized to determine the actual recruitment and selection process for every position. The Department of Human Resources will develop and conduct an active recruitment program designed to meet current and projected employment needs and will formulate recruitment strategies to support succession planning programs. The Department of Human Resources may make modifications to the recruitment process to enhance the quality of candidates while working within the parameters of this policy. The Department of Human Resources will conduct periodic reviews of past techniques and resources to ensure recruitment of a diverse, well-qualified pool of candidates. The Department of Human Resources will recruit from alternative sources, such as internships, through relationships with educational institutions, and succession planning.

When an employee retires or submits substantial notice to terminate from employment, the County Administrator may approve the over-filling of that position for up to two months for training and business continuity reasons. Funding for this over-filling will be subject to County Administrator authority.

### **Position Announcements**

All vacancies, both full and part-time, will be posted for at least ten (10) business days. All full-time, full-time reduced hour, part-time and seasonal employees will be eligible to apply for positions, subject to qualifications and experience. All requests for staffing vacancies will be submitted according to the County's Position Control Policy. Announcements will include the position title, minimum salary and grade, qualification requirements in the position description and the closing date. All announcements will contain the statement, "An Equal Opportunity Employer," and the TDD number and will be circulated via the online recruiting system. Departments must post open position announcements in employee areas and make position information available to employees.

Charles County Government supports its employee's growth and development and strives to promote from within when feasible. Some vacancies will automatically be advertised internally and externally concurrently, such as entry-level positions; Chief or Director-level positions; hard to fill positions; or when necessary to ensure a diverse candidate pool.

At the request of the hiring department, some positions may be advertised internally only, or internally for five (5) to ten (10) working days before advertising externally. The department will note the request on the Requisition for Personnel, along with justification for wanting to fill the vacant position internally. Positions approved for internal advertisement will be open to all full-time, full-time reduced hour, part-time, and seasonal employees.

After the five (5) to ten (10) day internal advertising period, Human Resources will review the applications received from internal candidates. If there are a minimum of three (3) very qualified internal candidates for the position, the recruiter will forward the applications to the hiring department for their review. If there are not three or more very qualified candidates, the position will be advertised externally.

Positions that are hard to fill may, at the request of the hiring department, be advertised without a closing date and instead use a best consideration date. The best consideration date will be the first cut-off date for applications, and any received will be sent to the hiring department for review. If there are at least three (3) qualified candidates, interviews will be scheduled. At the conclusion of the interviews if the hiring department determines they do not want to hire one of the candidates, they may continue to review applications that were submitted after the best consideration date.

Charles County Government is an Equal Opportunity Employer and will strive to balance the internal promotion of employees and succession planning needs of departments with overall recruitment best practices. The County aims to maintain a diverse, highly skilled workforce.

### **Career Ladder Classifications**

There are some classifications that are part of a career ladder series. Individuals in these classifications may be promoted based on attaining specified requirements and work performance. The additional requirements are described in the job descriptions. When an employee in a career ladder position attains the requirements of the next level position, it is the responsibility of the Department to determine eligibility for promotion and to make the change in position.

When a vacancy occurs in a career ladder, the position will be advertised at the entry level of the career ladder. A Department Director who wishes to advertise a vacant career ladder position at a level higher than entry-level shall submit a written request justifying the request for an exception to the Director of Human Resources for approval by the County Administrator.

### **Applications**

Applications for each position will be made available online on the Charles County Government website. Candidates can log in, create an account, and complete an application that may be used to apply for multiple open positions at different times. Charles County Government does not accept paper, fax, or email applications. All applications are online. Anyone seeking to apply who needs access to a computer or requiring assistance in using the online application system can contact the Department of Human Resources.

The Department of Human Resources, in conjunction with departments, may establish eligibility lists for certain positions. Based on tests and other objective criteria, eligibility lists may be established and maintained for one year or longer, as agreed upon by the department and Human Resources. Except where an eligibility list has been established for a position, Department Directors may review applications of same (previously filled) positions for a period up to 90 days, or an extension of 180 days may be made with the approval of the Director of Human Resources.

Employees who accept a new position due to hire, transfer, or promotion are encouraged to complete six months in that position before applying for another position in the County.

### **Employment Tests**

Employment tests (e.g., writing samples, computer exams, etc.) may be used as part of the hiring

process at the discretion of the hiring department. Employment tests will be administered by the hiring department with the concurrence of the Department of Human Resources.

### **Qualifying and Ranking Applicants**

After the closing date the Department of Human Resources will review applications to qualify and rank candidates to consider for interviews. The Department of Human Resources will forward all applications electronically to the hiring department. The hiring department will then review the qualifications and rankings and will notify the Department of Human Resources which candidates they would like to interview.

The Department of Human Resources may approve interviews with less than three qualified applicants; this will be decided on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the Director of Human Resources. The Director of the hiring department may appeal the Human Resources Director's decision to the County Administrator. The Department of Human Resources recommends the hiring department select no more than eight candidates to interview for a vacant position, with six candidates being the recommended number. If there is more than one vacant position of the same title undergoing concurrent recruitment, the department may select more than eight candidates to interview.

### **Candidate Interviews**

Interviews will be scheduled by the Department of Human Resources. Interview questions will be submitted to the Department of Human Resources with the requisition to fill the position. Questions are subject to approval by Human Resources. Interviews are conducted by a panel of at least three people. The interview panel should include the supervisor who will be supervising the incumbent. For some positions, the Department Director may also participate. A representative from the Department of Human Resources will participate in all interviews and may ask some of the interview questions and provide input during the interview process. The interview panel will use scoring sheets for each candidate interviewed.

### **License and Background Checks**

Some positions require background checks. For those positions, the Department of Human Resources will coordinate with the candidate to arrange gathering of this information, whether it is from local law enforcement or a private security clearance company. Background processes must be pre-approved by the Department of Human Resources.

For those positions that require a driver's license, the driving record must be reviewed by the Safety Officer before an offer of employment is finalized. Employees who will drive a County-owned vehicle will be entered into the County's Driver's Checking/Flagging Program per the Safety Manual.

### **Selection**

The Department of Human Resources will conduct reference checks on final candidates. All offers of employment require the recommendation of the Department Director and the approval of the Director of Human Resources, prior to being extended to the selected candidate. The hiring department will return all applications and interview scoring sheets to the Department of Human Resources, with their first and second hiring choices indicated. If the Director of Human Resources does not concur with the first or second choice selection of the hiring department, the Department Director may request approval from the County Administrator.

All offers of employment will be extended by the Department of Human Resources. The Director of Human Resources can approve a starting salary up to the midpoint of the grade salary. The County



Administrator may approve a starting salary over the midpoint.

### **Notification of Candidates**

The Department of Human Resources will coordinate with the hiring department for verbally notifying in-house candidates not selected. If non-selected in-house candidates are within the hiring department, the department will notify those candidates. Human Resources will notify other internal candidates who are not selected. Other applicants will be given written notice advising selection has been made within 30 days of staffing the position. Applicants who inquire about the status of an open position should be directed to the Department of Human Resources.

### **Employment of Relatives**

The employment of relatives in merit positions where a current employee has influence over their status or job security is restricted as follows:

1. The County will not consider for merit employment for any position, applicants who are members of the immediate family of a County Commissioner, or County Administrator, unless prior review and confirmation has been obtained from the Ethics Commission under Chapter 170-7 of the Charles County Code.
2. The County will not consider for merit employment within a Department, applicants who are immediate family members of the respective Department Director.
3. Immediate family members may not work in any situation in which a supervisor-employee relationship comes to prevail or where one member of the family relationship is in position to assume for the other the role of advocate or judge with respect to conditions of employment or promotion.

For the purposes of consistency, Department Directors shall ensure that these criteria for employment of relatives applies to all part-time employees within their department.

The following is a list of members of the family who are considered as the immediate family:

- spouse
- children and step-children
- parents and step-parents
- sister or brother, half-sister or half-brother, step-sister or step-brother
- grandchildren
- grandparents
- great-grandparents
- great-grandchildren
- father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law
- daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law
- co-parents

During times of emergencies and to accommodate shift swaps, immediate family members may serve one consecutive shift in the role of Paramedic or EMT on the same ambulance crew.

If two (2) employees marry while they are employed by the County, and, as a result, the situation then

prevails where one member of the family relationship is in position to assume for the other the role of advocate or judge with respect to conditions of employment or promotion, then one or the other must obtain a position where such relationship does not prevail within a period of one year. In the event the situation continues to prevail after one year has passed, then the Director of Human Resources will consider the matter and recommend a resolution to the County Administrator.

If the transfer or promotion of an employee, or a reorganization creates a conflict with this policy for persons already employed by the County, the Director of Human Resources will recommend a resolution to the County Administrator.

Nothing contained herein will prevent the Ethics Commission from authorizing an exemption under Chapter 170-7 of the Charles County Code upon the written request of the affected employee(s).