

WHY AN EMPLOYEE POLICY HANDBOOK?

A company employee handbook is critically important for a variety of reasons. First, there is no better way for an employer to communicate with employees about what the company expects from them, and what they may expect from the company. Also, by clearly spelling out procedures and policies in a company employee handbook, employers can often prevent expensive lawsuits by employees. Having a handbook also requires the employer to consider, in advance, how it wants to handle a wide range of employment-related issues.

While there is no federal or state law that requires employers to commit company policies to writing, in the absence of such written procedures, day to day company practices can become policy. In other words, what employers (supervisors, managers) do and say in the workplace when dealing with employees – whether it involves paid vacations, the dress code, excessive tardiness or any other workplace issue – can become policy through action. Consequently, more employers are using their employee handbooks to establish uniform personnel practices, thereby helping to avoid potential lawsuits.

Many employees believe the employee handbook is evidence of the terms of an employment contract. Try to avoid referring to employees as “permanent.” The employee handbook should not contain language that could imply a contractual relationship between the employer and employee.

The fact that the employer may amend, change or withdraw the employee handbook at any time without consulting employees makes the handbook very different from a contract. Every employer who has an employee handbook, or is developing one, should consider having a statement similar to the following:

“I understand that this handbook is a general guide and does not constitute an employment agreement or a guarantee to continued employment. I also understand that the employer can make changes to this handbook at any time, without notice. I further understand that I can be terminated at any time, with or without notice.”

Distributing the handbook to all employees is just as important as drafting the policies themselves. Be sure that employees acknowledge receipt of the company handbook and other documents by signing the appropriate acknowledgement forms. If the policy is amended, it is also critical that the updated policies are distributed to and acknowledged by all employees in a systematic fashion.

The Personnel Advisor provides employers with two methods for creating an employee handbook:

Employee Handbook Template – This easily editable and printable template includes over 45 general workplace policies and can be personalized with your company name and logo, or revised to include your specific policies in just a matter of minutes.

Sample Policy Statements – includes various individual policies that employers might consider or use as a basis to develop their own policy handbook. The various documents include sample policies, disclaimers, and acknowledgement forms that can be used to create a handbook or to supplement an existing handbook.

It is always recommended that the employer have a lawyer review the contents to ensure that the handbook does not impose any unwanted obligations for the employer and to make certain that it fully complies with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.