**COMMUNITY STANDARDS**

**North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCE)** **County Operations**

In our County Extension Centers, it is important to clearly communicate expectations identifying acceptable behaviors and standards for our workplaces. These standards define our shared guidelines, which we impose on ourselves and each other within our work community.

The goals of setting community standards are to treat each other with respect and to cooperate in establishing a good and productive place to work. Community standards are integral to Extension’s ability to satisfactorily and effectively serve our publics and meet our Extension mission. Further, they describe the behaviors expected of everyone in our organization. Because not all situations are identical, it may be necessary on occasions for administrators to interpret these standards to a particular situation, but at all times we must strive to administer them fairly, efficiently and in the best interest of all employees of the organization.

County Extension team members are expected to follow these community standards at a minimum and to comply with all applicable federal, state, county, and university policies, procedures and rules.

# Harassment and Discrimination Prevention

Within all Extension Centers, employees are all required to ensure the prevention of harassment or discrimination of others based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, veterans/military status, political affiliation, genetic information, or sexual orientation. Employees are expected to be aware of and adhere to the University’s policy of non-discrimination and non-harassment at all times while at work, in or out of the office, working with fellow staff members, employees, or volunteers outside of the office, and at any time they are conducting NC State University and NC A&T State University business.

# Work Schedules

Modified work schedules (including managed scheduling and time management) must be approved in advance by the County Extension Director.

* All employees that are subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act are expected to complete their jobs within the 40-hour work week. Such employees (County Operations Support Staff (COSS) and Administrative Support Staff) must obtain permission *in advance* to work beyond 40 hours in a work week and therefore earn compensatory time. Time worked without prior approval will be honored but failure to obtain prior approval or repeatedly working overtime without permission will result in disciplinary action. As with all categories of leave, employees will not be able to take the compensatory time off without prior approval as well. Supervisors shall work with COSS employees using time management to avoid overtime whenever possible.
* Employees subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act are required to punch time daily in WolfTime. After entry by the employee, the County Extension Director is responsible for verifying and approving all punched time in WolfTime.
* EHRA employees (Extension Agents and County Extension Directors) are not subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act. As such, they will be allowed managed scheduling to attend to personal

needs during the workday as long as such scheduling does not significantly interfere with the work needs of the office. Agents may take time as determined by the consensus of the employee and County Extension Director, and prior approval must be obtained from the County Extension Director.

# Breaks

Each Extension staff member is allowed lunch breaks and personal breaks during the course of the workday based on the local county government's standard procedures on breaks and office hours, if any, or upon the County Director's direction. Professional judgment is the expectation for maintaining social and/or personal breaks in a manner that does not become excessive or disrupt one’s own work or that of others in the office.

# Use of Office Equipment

Office equipment, property, and services such as email, phones, regular mail, faxes, copiers, etc., are intended for official business purposes.

# Use of Office Computers and Networks

* Computer user must abide by all University, federal, state, agency and county policies, rules, and regulations regarding what is allowed or prohibited in terms of information technology resources.
* If not prohibited by county Information Technology (IT) policy, limited amounts of personal computer use, including internet/web use, email, etc. are permissible, but must not interfere with a staff member doing his or her work, including immediately addressing phone calls, walk-in clients, or responding to another staff member. Such use must abide by all other University and county policies, rules, and regulations regarding what is prohibited.
* It is permissible to do limited personal searching/browsing on the internet, but again this is expected to be kept to a minimum, and must abide by all other University, federal, state, agency and county policies, rules, and regulations regarding what is prohibited.
* Recreational games should not be used during office hours unless it is for programming needs.
* Downloading software applications may or may not be allowed by the IT system administrators and must comply with NC State University contract authority policies and the Computer Use Regulation. Any software installed by employees must have a work-related purpose and may not be offensive to co-workers. The employee is responsible for offering proof of license and for maintaining original software for any application they install. All software, including software with Clickwraps, must meet applicable NC State University regulations, notably the [Computer Use Regulation](http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-08-00-02) and the [Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Accessibility Regulation](http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-04-25-05). The ICT Accessibility Regulation requires that any software or output from software that you share with others must meet the applicable accessibility standards specified in the regulation. For more information, see: https://software.ncsu.edu/faqs/clickwrap-faqs/#regulations
* Software may be removed at the discretion of the IT system administrators if it hinders the performance of the computer or office network, or if it is installed in violation of the license terms or university regulations. It is never permissible to listen to, view, or download prohibited material to one's assigned computer or other device.

**Home Use of Equipment**

See NCSU Regulation: https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-07-30-14/

Equipment which is the property of the state or federal government may be used at home by University faculty/staff employees, provided the following criteria are met:

1. Use of the equipment at home will not interfere with the operational needs of the Extension Office.

2. Home use is approved by the appropriate County Extension Director, or DED if to be used by the CED or an Area Specialized Agent (ASA).

3. The equipment is used only for University business.

Individuals who receive approval to remove equipment from the office for use at home for a period greater than 30 days must complete NCSU Equipment Tracking Home Use Authorization Form (NCSU Form CA-2). Form CA-2 must be completed on any piece of equipment that is taken home regardless of the cost of the equipment or whether the asset is tagged.

When an employee is approved to use University equipment in his or her home for a period greater than 30 days, the CED and employee should complete the top half of NCSU Equipment Tracking Home Use Authorization Form (NCSU Form CA-2).

# Food/Beverages in Work Areas and Within the Office

It is acceptable to have a beverage and/or snack at your desk. Please avoid eating in the presence of clients. All employees have the responsibility for keeping things tidy and clean in the entire office, including break areas, especially as they relate to food and beverage items.

# Visitors

Visitors to the office for personal reasons must be kept to a minimum. Visiting children must be supervised and are to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to a place of business. *See Child Care section below.*

# Cell Phones

Personal phone calls, texting, and/or instant messaging during work hours are to be kept to a minimum. Personal calls and text messaging should not disrupt coworkers conducting regular work. Also, phone conversations must not be disruptive in terms of volume, duration, content, or topic. Cell phone ring tone volume is to be turned off, turned to vibrate or a very low volume in the office. If a personal long distance telephone call must be made, it should only be done on personal cell phone and not on the work phones. Employees should not use their cell phones for texting or web surfing during work meetings, as this behavior is unprofessional in the workplace.

**Appropriate Dress**

Employees will report to work dressed professionally and appropriately for their work responsibilities and the demeanor of the workplace. Business casual is the standard dress code unless conducting field work or similar activities; proper attire for these alternative work-related tasks may be interpreted by the County Extension Director or direct supervisor. All clothing should be neat in appearance and reflect positively on the County and Cooperative Extension.

For the purpose of Extension work, the definition of business casual will include neat blue jeans. The following items are still deemed inappropriate dress for Extension activities:

t-shirts sweatshirts shorts

casual tank tops casual flip flop shoes low-cut shirts/blouses

bare midriffs short skirts clothes with tears or holes

sneakers (unless approved for health reasons) leggings as pants

Extension personnel that are required to be outside the office for farm visits, field days, youth programs, etc. are allowed to dress appropriately for that occasion (event-related t-shirts, shorts, capris, hats, sneakers, etc. may be suitable). Extension personnel should always be dressed in the same fashion or more formally than the clients they are assisting, i.e., field vs. office vs. client meeting vs. formal banquet, etc. Special circumstances, requiring a different standard of dress, may be approved by the County Extension Director.

Casual Fridays are at the discretion of the County Extension Director, in accordance with County policies, rules and regulations. Even on casual Fridays, dress should reflect the situational work to be done that day. Casual Friday attire should always be neat, clean and appropriate for the occasion.

If an employee’s attire does not reflect positively on the County and Cooperative Extension, the employee’s supervisor will discuss the subject of personal appearance with the employee. If the clothing is unacceptable for the day/event, the supervisor may send the individual home to change and/or for the day.

# Child Care

It is not acceptable to bring children to the office for long periods of time or as a substitute for regular child care. If a child is ill or out of school for the day, leave must be taken by the employee for the time away from the office unless work from home arrangements have been approved by the CED in advance. Compensatory time, sick, or annual leave is appropriate for these circumstances.

**Pets in the Office**

Except in the cases of certified service animals, it is inappropriate to bring pets to the office. It can be dangerous for staff as well as clients when dogs or other pets are in the office. Make sure you arrange for any pet care or transportation outside of the workplace.

# Backup Office Support

Everyone is to participate in covering the phones and in opening and closing the office on time if and when the primary staff persons are not able to perform those functions. All staff members should assist in picking up and answering the telephone or assisting walk-in clients at any time. All employees need to maintain their calendar via the Google Calendar to ensure appropriate office support. Google calendars need to be shared with the CED and all other office staff (COSS and Agents) with details to ensure appropriate communication in the office. This is fundamental in providing quality customer service.

# Reporting Lateness or Absence

If an employee will be late or has an unexpected schedule change without prior approval, they should inform the County Extension Director and/or designated staff member as soon as possible. When calling the office, efforts should be made to leave the message with a staff member rather than on an answering machine. If someone would like to request to leave early for an approved reason, the request must be communicated to the County Extension Director and/or supervisor as early as possible. All leave, including managed scheduling and time management, is a privilege and subject to supervisory approval.