

THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK CHECKLIST



Use this checklist as a practical tool to identify strengths, spot gaps, and protect your organization. The more you check off 'yes' the more robust your employee handbook is.



Last reviewed on: _____

General structure

Yes No

Do you have an employee handbook?

Is one department or individual responsible for maintaining the handbook?

Is that department or individual:

Held accountable for maintaining and updating the handbook?

Recognized for efforts related to the handbook?

Do you have stated goals for the handbook, such as:

Establishing consistent communication across the organization

Communicating expectations and policies

Reflecting organizational values and culture

Introducing new employees to the company's mission, values, and background

Reducing legal risk through consistent policy application

Promoting transparency and fairness

Demonstrating compliance with employment laws

Guiding decision-making for managers and supervisors

Reducing turnover and misunderstandings

Minimizing legal risk and clarifying at-will employment status

Maintenance and acknowledgment

Yes

No

Is the handbook dated and version-controlled to ensure employees receive the most current edition?

Is the handbook available in a consistent format (digital or printed) and easily accessible to all employees, including those with disabilities?

Is the handbook reviewed at least annually?

Do you revise it in response to legal, operational, or cultural changes?

Has legal counsel reviewed the current version?

Do you reserve the right to modify the handbook unilaterally?

Do new employees attend a handbook orientation?

Do all employees sign an acknowledgment of receipt and at-will employment?

Does the handbook include a statement that employment is at-will and may be terminated by either party at any time, with or without cause or notice, as allowed by law?

Are employees encouraged to seek clarification from supervisors?

Does the handbook clearly state that it is not a contract?

Does the handbook include a disclaimer that it supersedes prior versions?

Employment policies and practices

Yes

No

Absences, attendance, and punctuality

Access to medical records (29 CFR § 825.500)

Access to personnel files

Affirmative action (41 CFR Part 60-1)

At-will employment disclaimer

Employment classification (full-time, part-time, temporary)

Exempt/nonexempt status under FLSA (29 CFR Part 541)

Employment eligibility verification (Form I-9) and E-Verify compliance (if applicable)

Pay transparency and salary disclosure policy (if required by state or local law)

Job posting and internal transfers

Orientation or introductory period

Performance standards and appraisals

Promotions and transfers

Resignation and termination

Severance pay or pay in lieu of notice

Exit interviews

Reemployment eligibility

Compensation and time

Yes

No

Paydays and pay increases

Deductions from pay (29 CFR § 531.36, § 531.37)

Direct deposit

Overtime (29 CFR § 778.101 et seq.)

On-call pay (29 CFR § 785.17)

Call-in pay

Timekeeping procedures (29 CFR § 516.2)

Workweek defined (29 CFR § 778.103, § 778.105)

Garnishments (29 CFR § 870.1 et seq.)

Policy on timely correction of payroll errors and employee notification

Rest and meal break compliance (state-specific)

Policy on employee loans or salary advances (if applicable)

Travel time pay policies (**29 CFR § 785.38**)

Bonuses and incentive compensation

Leave and time off

Yes

No

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), if employing 50 or more employees (29 CFR § 825.301)

Pregnancy accommodation under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) (42 U.S.C. § 2000gg)

Paid time off, sick leave, and vacation

Bereavement leave

Domestic violence leave

Voting leave policy (state dependent)

Jury duty (28 U.S.C. § 1875)

Paid holidays and holiday pay policy

Military leave (**USERRA**) (**38 U.S.C. § 4301 et seq.**)

Lactation accommodations (**PUMP Act**).

Leave of absence (non-FMLA)

Inclement weather/emergency closings

Layoffs and recalls

School visitation leave (if required by state law)

Conduct and workplace behavior

Yes

No

Intellectual property and non-disclosure obligations

Clear prohibition of retaliation for reporting concerns or participating in investigations

Internal complaint process

Whistleblower protections

Code of conduct and disciplinary procedures

Drug and alcohol policy / drug testing

Harassment and sexual harassment (42 U.S.C. § 2000e; 29 CFR § 1604.11)

Policy on workplace bullying

Conflict of interest

Fraternization or workplace relationship policy

Nepotism and employment of relatives policy

Dress code and grooming standards, with accommodation guidance

Confidentiality

Falsification of employment or company records

Fighting or workplace violence

Policy on responding to employment verification and reference requests

Off-duty conduct policy (compliant with applicable state laws)

Open-door policy

Workplace rules and expectations

Anti-discrimination and DEIB

Yes

No

Equal employment opportunity (42 U.S.C. § 2000e)

Statement of federally protected characteristics under EEO laws

Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.)

Reasonable accommodation process

Religious accommodation policy

Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) compliance (42 U.S.C. § 2000ff)

Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (**PWFA**) (42 U.S.C. § 2000gg)

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)

Gender identity and expression

Non-discrimination based on reproductive health decisions (as required by applicable state law)

Technology and communication

Yes

No

Telecommuting and hybrid work policies

Remote work policies address wage and hour compliance, equipment use, and reimbursement

Flexible work arrangements (e.g., job sharing, compressed schedules, flextime, etc.)

Employee data privacy and security measures

E-mail and internet use

Use of company equipment and personal devices

Voice and electronic mail

Electronic monitoring

AI and automation tools (transparency and ethical use)

Social media use

Benefits and programs

Yes

No

Benefits overview (medical, dental, vision)

Eligibility criteria and waiting periods for benefits

Statement on **COBRA rights** and continuation of coverage

Employee communications regarding benefit changes (ERISA disclosures)

Educational aid

Employee assistance programs (EAP)

Eldercare or childcare benefits

Retirement plans (401(k), pension)

Business expense reimbursement

Travel and entertainment expenses

Employee discounts and perks (if applicable)

Overview of short-term and long-term disability benefits (if applicable)

Mental health parity and behavioral health support (if applicable)

Health savings or flexible spending account details (if applicable)

Safety and security

Yes

No

Workplace safety and OSHA compliance (29 U.S.C. § 651)

Fitness-for-duty evaluations (42 U.S.C. § 12112(d))

Emergency preparedness and evacuation procedures

Workplace violence prevention plan (required in some states and industries)

Medical exams and return-to-work protocols

Motor vehicle safety

Reporting work-related injuries

Hazard communication (**29 CFR § 1910.1200**)

Security and visitor policies

Workplace safety training and documentation

State-specific compliance

Yes

No

Do you comply with state-required wage notices and posting obligations (e.g., California's Wage Theft Prevention Act, New York's wage notice laws)?

Do policies reflect applicable paid sick/family leave laws, minimum wage, and predictive scheduling laws?

Have you reviewed your handbook for alignment with all applicable state or local laws? (e.g., paid family leave, pay transparency laws, salary history bans, final paycheck rules)

Do policies reflect marijuana use and drug testing restrictions under state law?

Do wage statements/paystubs meet state-specific formatting or content requirements? (state-specific)

Does your handbook address state-required protections for extreme heat or outdoor working conditions (if applicable)?

Other

Yes

No

Policy on professional conduct with vendors and external partners

Outside employment policy

Intellectual property created during employment

Media and public communications policy

Company property returns upon separation

Record retention and document handling expectations

Insider trading (if applicable)

Non-solicitation and non-disparagement (if applicable)

Legal disclaimer: This checklist is for general informational purposes and does not constitute legal advice. Always consult qualified legal counsel in each jurisdiction where your organization operates to ensure compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.