



**Office of Human Resources
Standard Operating Procedure
HR SOP #204**

Subject: Employment of Family Members/Special Relationships

Effective Date: June 1, 2017

Policy Statement:

The Department will not change the employment status or hire employees into positions in which they either supervise or are supervised by a family member or someone with whom they have a special relationship. No employee shall advocate for or cause the advancement, appointment, employment, promotion, demotion or transfer of a family member or someone with whom they have a special relationship to a position within the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Definitions:

Emergency Situation: A time of crisis or staffing shortage, when employees who are family members or who are in special relationships must be utilized to ensure the ongoing operation of a unit.

Family Member: A spouse, parent, grandparent, child, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, step-parent, step-child, step-brother, step-sister, half-brother or half-sister.

Special Relationship: A person has a special relationship with another if they are cohabitating, 'dating', or sexually involved.

Procedure:

Division Directors shall ensure that persons who are family members or who have special relationships with other employees are not hired, assigned to or used in a position where such action would result in a supervisor/subordinate relationship irrespective of the number of intervening levels of supervision.

Employees are expressly prohibited from engaging in any form of special relationship with another employee if they work directly for or supervise the employee with whom they are involved.

Prohibitions:

Employees who are family members or have special relationships may not be assigned to or work in positions within the same work unit without the approval of the Commissioner, or for EPD, the EPD Director.

A person who is a family member or has a special relationship with:

- A member of the Board of Natural Resources may not be employed by or be a party to a contract with the Department.
- A Division Director may not be employed in the Department without specific approval of the Commissioner.
- An employee on the Senior Executive Pay Plan may not be employed within the same Division as the employee without specific approval of the Commissioner, or for EPD, the EPD Director.
- Another employee cannot be:
 - Placed in a direct co-worker relationship with that person;
 - Directly supervised by that person;
 - Reporting to the same supervisor;
 - In a working relationship with that person in which the nature of the responsibilities may contribute to fraud, financial gain or collusion; or
 - Placed in circumstances with that person in which fiscal checks or balances can be compromised.

When a Family or Special Relationship Develops:

If current employees become family members or develop a special relationship, as defined by this policy, the same conditions will apply. If this occurs, affected employees must immediately notify the Department Human Resources Director. The Department Human Resources Director will take the necessary steps to relieve the situation, subject to the final approval of the Commissioner, or for EPD, the EPD Director.

Hiring Decisions Due to This Policy:

Recommendations and decisions made by employees in hiring shall be made without bias, the appearance of partiality or a conflict of interest, or the potential to create a conflict due to personal relationships.

Hiring managers are responsible for ensuring that violations of this policy do not occur in hiring decisions. Hiring decisions involving non-selection made to comply with this policy must be sufficiently documented.

Reporting Violations:

Employees who have knowledge of a violation of this Standard Operating Procedure are to report the situation to their supervisor and/or the Department Human Resources Director.

Exceptions:

A request for a waiver due to emergency situations or unique or compelling circumstances must be made in writing to the agency Ethics Officer. Waivers may only be granted by the Commissioner, or for EPD, the EPD Director.

Attachments:

None.