



Ontario Employee Handbook Checklist

Small Business Edition

Updated: July 2020

Introduction

Employee handbooks are a necessity in today's complex work environments regardless of the size of the organization. Before hiring your first employee, having well-established written policies can protect you, your business and your employees.

This Checklist was designed to give you the most common elements found in an employee handbook. It will guide you through the development and design of your own handbook. You chose the policies that are best suited for your company. Those policies that are a **legally required** have been flagged along with other HR best practices that we recommend you include in your handbook.

Why Policies Are Important

Employee Handbooks serve several important functions:

- Communicate values and expectations of how things are done at your business.
- A clearly written set of rules and guidelines for all to follow.
- Keep your organization compliant with legislation and provide protection against employment litigation.
- Document and implement best practices appropriate to your business.
- Support consistent treatment of all staff, which is fair and transparent.
- Help management to make decisions that are consistent and predictable.

Pitfalls of Not Having an Employee Handbook

- If policies are required by law, you could be subject to fines and prosecution under the legislation.
- Your business is at a greater risk of receiving wrongful dismissal, harassment, and discrimination complaints.
- Without written policies it is difficult to have consistent practices across the whole organization.

How to Distribute Your Employee Handbook

- All employees should always have access to the employee handbook, having a copy on your intranet or some other central file system would be ideal.
- During orientation, all new employees should be required to read the handbook and sign an acknowledgement form which is maintained in their personnel file.
- When new policies are added or amended a new acknowledgement form is signed for each change and filed in the employee's file. Another option is maintaining a digital acknowledgement in the form of an email from the employee.
- An employee meeting introducing new policies or amendments is a good best practice.

The material contained in this document is for information and reference purposes only and is not intended as legal or professional advice. The adoption of the practices described in this document may not meet all the needs, requirements, or obligations of individual workplaces.

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✓	Questions
	Is there an Employee Handbook or other policies already in place that need to be included?
	If yes, have these policies been reviewed annually? (If not, determine which legislation has changed since last updated.)
	Do you have employees located in other provinces? (If yes, check multi-jurisdictional legislation.)
	Is there a collective agreement to consider? (If yes, the agreement takes precedence and should be referenced.)
	Which languages are spoken in the workplace? (If applicable, have handbook translated.)
	Does your company maintain current employee files? (Employee files are required.)

SECTIONS

✓	Introduction
	Welcome Letter from CEO
	Statement of Philosophy
	Who We Are
	Vision and Mission Statement
	Scope or Purpose
	Disclaimer

✓	Employment and Guiding Principles	Legislation
	Employment Principles	AODA, Human Rights
	Business Travel Expense	Income Tax
	Confidential, Non-Disclosure and Inventions	
	Conflict of Interest	BEST PRACTICE
	Drugs and Alcohol Testing	Human Rights, PIPEDA, Personal Health Act
	Employee Orientation and Training	AODA, OHSA, PIPEDA
	Employment Classification	
	Employment of Relatives	
	Employment References	PIPEDA, Human Rights
	Exit Interviews	
	Flexible Work Arrangements	ESA
	Gifts, Favours and Entertainment	
	Hours of Work, eating periods and rest periods	ESA
	Independent Contractors	ESA, WSIB, Income Tax
	Interns and Co-op Students	Education Act, ESA, WSIB
	Job Posting	AODA, Human Rights
	Moving and Relocation Expenses	Income Tax, Taxable Benefit
	Non-Solicitation and Non-Competition	BEST PRACTICE
	Probationary Period	ESA

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Recruitment and Selection	AODA, Human Rights
Student Employment	ESA, AODA, Human Rights
Temporary Help Agencies	ESA
Temporary Lay-offs	ESA
Termination of Employment	BEST PRACTICE ESA – notice, pay in lieu, severance, layoff
Terms and Conditions of Employment	Canadian Immigration Act, ESA, Human Rights
Volunteers	

✓	Pay and Performance	Legislation
	Pay Principles	
	Attendance and Absenteeism	BEST PRACTICE
	Bonus Program	
	Call-in Pay	
	Equal Pay for Equal Work	ESA, Human Rights
	Job Evaluation	Pay Equity repealed '95 replaced by Workplace Discrimination
	Overtime	BEST PRACTICE ESA – banking OT, average, hours, compressed workweek
	Pay Administration	ESA – minimum wage, pay statement requirements
	Pay Advances	
	Pay Range Structure	
	Performance Reviews	AODA
	Tips and gratuities	
	Travel Time and Pay	
	Wage Garnishments	

✓	Benefits and Leaves of Absence	Legislation
	Public Holidays	ESA
	Vacation and Vacation Pay	ESA
	Leaves of Absence	ESA – job protected LOA
	Benefits During Leaves	
	Bereavement Leave	

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Child Death Leave	
Crime-Related Child Disappearance Leave	
Critical Illness Leave	
Declared Emergency Leave	**NEW
Domestic Sexual Violence Leave	
Family Caregiver Leave	
Family Medical Leave	
Family Responsibility Leave	
Infectious Disease Emergency Leave	**NEW
Jury or Court Witness Leave	
Organ Donor Leave	
Parental and/or Adoption Leave	
Pregnancy Leave	
Reservist Leave	
Sick Leave	
Voting Leave	
Other Benefits	
Company Vehicles	
Education Assistance Program	
Employee Assistance Program	
Employee Discount Program	
Employee Recognition Program	
Professional Association Membership	
Retirement	
Seminars and Conferences	
Short Term Disability/Sick Pay Benefits	

✓	Employee Relations	Legislation
	Employee Relations Principles	
	Accommodation on the Basis of Disability	LEGALLY REQUIRED AODA, Human Rights
	Community Service	
	Computer, Email & Internet Use	BEST PRACTICE CASL
	Conduct and Behaviour	
	Dispute Resolution	
	Diversity & Non-Discrimination Policy	Human Rights
	Dress Code, Personal Appearance and Uniforms	

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	Instant Messaging	CASL
	Personal Information Protection (Privacy)	BEST PRACTICE PIPEDA
	Personal Relationships	
	Progressive Discipline	BEST PRACTICE
	Religious Accommodation	Human Rights, ESA
	Searches and Surveillance	PIPEDA
	Social Media	CASL
	Substance Impairment and Fit for Work	OHSA
	Whistleblower Protection	OSHA, Criminal Code, PIPIDA, etc.
	Workplace Harassment	LEGALLY REQUIRED OHSA, Human Rights
✓	Health, Safety and Security	Legislation
	Health and Safety Policy	LEGALLY REQUIRED OSHA, Criminal Code
	Accident and Injury Reporting	OHSA, WSIB, Environment Protection
	Accident Investigation	OHSA, WSIB, Environment Protection
	Alcohol and Drugs in the Workplace (or Substance Abuse)	BEST PRACTICE OHSA, Human Rights, Inc. substance abuse
	Business Interruption	
	Cell Phone Use	Highway Traffic, OHSA
	Civil Emergencies and Business Interruptions	OHSA, AODA, ESA, WSIB, PIPEDA
	Emergency Leave – Declared Emergencies	Emergency Mgmt., WSIB, ESA, EI, PIPEDA
	First Aid	OHSA, WSIB
	Incremental Weather	
	Joint Health and Safety Committee	OHSA (if required, see link to MOL)
	Personal Hygiene and Food Safety (food industry)	
	Personal Protective Equipment (include wearing masks and gloves if social distancing not possible)	OHSA and COVID-19 PPE
	Restricted Access	ESA, Emergency Mgmt.
	Return to Work Program	Human Rights, WSIB, AODA
	Sanitization (high-touch surfaces, hand sanitization)	**NEW – COVID-19
	Scent Free Environment	Human Rights, OHSA
	Security of Information Technology	
	Social Distance (where possible stay 2m/6 ft apart)	**NEW – COVID-19
	Smoking in the Workplace	Smoke-Free Ontario, OHSA, Non-smokers Health Act
	Video Surveillance	PIPEDA

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Work From Home	OHSA
Work Refusal	OHSA
Working Alone	OHSA
Workplace Violence	LEGALLY REQUIRED OHSA, Bill 168 Criminal Code
Sign Off	
Employee Acknowledgement Form	

Quick and Easy Way to Create Your Employee Handbook

We have developed a comprehensive **Ontario Employee Handbook** including the most common policies. All the research, policy writing and design have been done for you by a Certified Human Resources designated professional. Please give us a call if you'd like learn more about our Employee Handbook.

For further information, please contact us at:

<https://workwiseconsult.ca/contact/>