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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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December 21, 2015

To : James Brown, III - Executive Director  
RCRC Commissioners

From: David Stringer  
Human Resources Division Head

Re: SC Ethics Act / Nepotism

I researched the S.C. Ethics Act of 1991 and how it relates to the Richland County Recreation Commission's Nepotism policy and the issues raised at Winthrop University. The S.C. Ethics Act states:

**SECTION 8-13-750.** Employment, promotion, advancement, or discipline of family member of public official, member, or employee.

(A) No public official, public member, or public employee may cause the employment, appointment, promotion, transfer, or advancement of a family member to a state or local office or position in which the public official, public member, or public employee supervises or manages.

(B) A public official, public member, or public employee may not participate in an action relating to the discipline of the public official's, public member's, or public employee's family member.

An employee family member is defined as: an individual who is (a) the spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild ([S.C. Code Ann. Section 8-13-1300](#)), or (b) a member of the individual's immediate family.

Immediate family is defined as follows:

1. A child residing in a candidate's, public official's, public member's, or public employee's household;
2. A spouse of a candidate, public official, public member, or public employee; or
3. An individual claimed by the candidate, public official, public member, or public employee or the candidate's, public official's, or public employee's spouse as a dependent for income tax purposes. ([S.C. Code Ann. Section 8-13-1300](#))



Nationally Accredited:  
The Richland County Recreation Commission  
became South Carolina's first nationally  
accredited parks and recreation agency in 2006.

**Equal Opportunity Statement:** The Richland County Recreation Commission is dedicated to the concept of equal opportunity. The Commission will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, or marital status, in its employment practices or in the participation policies for its facilities.

With regard to the Richland County Recreation Commission, a family member of the Executive Director may not be hired into the areas supervised or managed: the Executive Division, the Human Resources Division, the Finance Division or the Safety and Security Division.

In the case of Winthrop University, the President improperly hired her husband into a position within the President's office. This violated that Ethics Act in that she "participated" in the hiring and it was department in which she managed. Further compounding the issues, it was reported that the President allegedly informed her IT Department to delete an e-mail from the system in which she instructed that her husband be hired.

Recommendations:

- a. The Richland County Recreation Commission Policy was recently updated (June 15, 2015) based on attorney review. However, after a review of the issues addressed the Winthrop case I think it would be prudent to specifically document the [Ethics Act Section 3-13-750](#) and [S.C. Code Ann. Section 8-13-1300](#) in the Richland County Recreation Policy.
- b. Ethics Act Section 8-13-350 indicates that an Ethics brochure is to be provided to public officials, members and employees. The Richland County Recreation Commission should ensure that this is done. I spoke with Attorney Michael Birchstead at the Ethics Commission and he informed me that there no longer is a brochure but rather they refer individuals to the website: [Ethic.sc.gov](http://Ethic.sc.gov)

I am attaching a draft policy that I have reviewed with attorney Rick Morgan,

Sincerely,



David Stringer

Human Resources Division Head

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**NOTHING CONTAINED IN THIS POLICY CREATES A CONTRACT RIGHT. CONSISTENT WITH SOUTH CAROLINA LAW, ALL EMPLOYEES ARE EMPLOYED "AT WILL" WHICH MEANS THAT THE EMPLOYEE HAS THE RIGHT TO TERMINATE HIS OR HER EMPLOYMENT AT ANY TIME, WITH OR WITHOUT NOTICE OR CAUSE, AND THAT THE COMMISSION RETAINS THE SAME RIGHT. EXCEPTIONS TO THE POLICY THAT ALL EMPLOYEES ARE EMPLOYED "AT WILL" MAY BE MADE ONLY BY WRITTEN AGREEMENT SIGNED BY THE COMMISSION AND THE EMPLOYEE AND APPROVED BY VOTE OF THE BOARD.**



## **Employment of Relatives**

Human Resources  
Policy No. 070

Review Date: December 21, 2015  
Last Revised: June 15, 2015

### **Policy Statement**

Relatives, Household or Close Family members of current Richland County Recreation Commission employees may not be hired, promoted or reassigned to a position in which the current Richland County Recreation Commission employee directly supervises or manages. This policy is adopted to prevent the appearance of favoritism by a supervisor and to prevent potential safety, security and employee morale issues.

#### **1. Definition of Relative, Household or Close Family Member:**

A relative, Household or Close Family member is an individual who is a spouse, parent, brother or sister (and their spouse or children), child (and their spouse), mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent or grandchild, first cousin, or step-parents or step-children of a current Richland County Recreation Commission employee. Additionally, unrelated associates residing together or otherwise engaged in an apparently romantic relationship (such as a domestic partner, co-habitant or significant other) are treated as being Close Family members for purposes of this policy.



**2. Exceptions:**

**2.1 Recruitment**

In the extraordinary circumstance that the Director of Human Resources determines that the Richland County Recreation Commission is unable to recruit a qualified individual to fill a particular position, the Executive Director may grant an exception to this policy.

**2.2 Marriage**

If employees marry, become Household or Close Family members after employment and a conflict of interest or a management problem of supervision, safety, security or morale result (determined at the sole discretion of the Richland County Recreation Commission) or, if a reorganization creates such a conflict, reasonable time may be provided to resolve the matter. If resolution is not possible, the Richland County Recreation Commission may require one or both of the employees to transfer or resign.

**2.3 Temporary Employment**

Temporary employees or temporary assignment are not within the purview of this policy.

**3. South Carolina Ethics Act:**

The Richland County Recreation Commission complies with all aspects of the South Carolina Ethics Act as it relates to employment of relatives in Section 8-13-750, and any other applicable Sections. See attached Addendum A.

**4. Additional information**

Additional information regarding the State Ethics Act including how to file a claim can be obtained online at [Ethics.sc.gov](http://Ethics.sc.gov)

ADOPTED BY RICHLAND COUNTY RECREATION COMMISSION BOARD

BOARD MEETING DATE: December 21, 2015  
(Date Approved)

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Employment of Relatives – Addendum A**

Human Resources  
Policy No. 070

Review Date: December 21, 2015  
Last Revised: June 15, 2015

**1. South Carolina Ethics Act – October, 1991. SECTION 8-13-750** Employment, promotion, advancement, or discipline of a family member, of a public official, member, or employee.

(A) No public official, public member, or public employee may cause or participate in the employment, appointment, promotion, transfer, or advancement of a family member to a state or local office or position in which the public official, public member, or public employee supervises or manages.

(B) A public official, public member, or public employee may not participate in an action relating to the discipline of the public official's, public member's, or public employee's family member.