

10 Critical Canadian HR Policies



According to an HR Insider survey, less than 20% of HR managers are confident that their employment policies are compliant with provincial legislation. The main reason HR Managers cite their lack of confidence is that they are too busy dealing with daily fires to assess and/ or audit their current policies.

As a result, HR Insider editors have compiled a list of 10 critical HR policies that all HR Managers need to ensure are compliant. That's not to say that there aren't dozens more policies that should be updated due to recent case law and legislative changes, but among the nearly limitless range of policies that should be compliant and contained in every employee handbook, these 10 are critically important:

1. ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Workplace harassment remains a major HR challenge. Many provinces now specifically require employers to adopt and implement anti-harassment programs, including a written harassment policy. An effective anti-harassment policy specifically and clearly bans psychological harassment of all forms in the workplace, including sexual harassment, bullying, etc., setting out a complaint resolution process and defining the range of disciplinary measures for violations, up to and including termination.
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2. PRIVACY POLICY

In this digital age, safeguarding the private information of customers and employees from hackers, identity thieves, and other cyber threats isn't just a legal obligation but a business imperative. One key element of data security is a policy to protect the personal information of your own employees and providing mechanisms for accessing and revising personal information and resolving complaints.

3. OVERTIME POLICY

An overtime policy establishes overtime rates, strictly controlling the circumstances in which overtime may be worked and laying out the process for obtaining prior approval to work overtime—all of which must be consistent with employment standards requirements of your jurisdiction (or the Canada Labour Code if you're federally regulated).

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4. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

A progressive discipline policy sets out the process to be followed in response to employee misconduct and explains how the organization responds to instances of misconduct; specifically identifying the escalating disciplinary measures which you may impose.

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5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

A conflict of interest policy bars employees from engaging in conduct that creates a conflict of interest, defining such a conflict broadly to include any means by which an employee might inappropriately gain a personal benefit by taking advantage of the employment relationship and clearly stating the disciplinary measures for violations.

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6. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

An occupational health and safety policy ensures employees are informed of their rights and obligations relating to workplace safety issues, e.g., the employee's obligations to take reasonable care in the workplace; carry out their work in accordance with established safe work procedures and occupational health and safety regulations; use and wear the required protective equipment; not engage in horseplay; not be impaired by drugs, alcohol, or other intoxicants; and promptly report any circumstances which pose a safety risk.

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7. COMPUTER NETWORK USE POLICY

Computers and the internet have changed the way we work and communicate. One of the results is an increase in policies that outline general principles and philosophies, clarifies boundaries of acceptable practices for the employee and encourages responsible use.

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8. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM POLICY

Attendance at work, whether in a physical work location or virtual, is usually an essential component of the relationship between an employer and employee. Frequently an employer expects an employee to be present and engaged in work even when the employee does not work at the employer's place of business, during agreed-upon hours of work. As part of the employment relationship, it is good practice that there be an agreement in place that indicates an employee is to be engaged in work at expected locations and times of the day. When employees are not at work as expected this can cause a disruption in productivity.

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9. DRUGS AND ALCOHOL TESTING POLICY

Testing is the most effective way to enforce your organization's anti-drug and alcohol policies. But the policy must be carefully drafted to withstand the all but inevitable legal challenges from the union and affected employees, especially if you impose the policy unilaterally.

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10. SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND FITNESS FOR DUTY POLICY

Workplace substance abuse remains a major challenge for HR managers. Although sound in principle, the traditional zero-tolerance policy is ill-suited to the legal complexities of the modern world. This is especially true now that Canada has

legalized the use of marijuana. You can still take a clear and firm line on employee drug and alcohol abuse for the purpose of health and safety. But the policy also has to exhibit finesse and sensitivity to legal subtleties. One of the best ways to create an enforceable policy is to base it not on the morality or even legality of substance abuse but the indisputable fact that it renders employees unfit for duty to the detriment of not just safety but productivity.

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CONCLUSION

Implemented properly, these 10 policies form the core of an effective employee manual. HR Insider includes guidance to create these 10 critical policies, along with a model of each that can be adapted for your organization.

[Download the Special Report here](#)