

**WELCOME CENTER EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**January, 2012**



**LouisianaTravel.com**

Louisiana Office of Tourism  
Welcome Centers Section

**EMPLOYEE MANUAL**

## **FOREWORD**

The purpose of this publication is to:

- Orient classified and unclassified employees of the program to the general policies and procedures particular to the Welcome Center Program of the Louisiana Office of Tourism;
- Provide a uniform standard of operations and administration throughout Louisiana's Welcome Centers;
- Give all Welcome Center staff an outline for a superlative level of visitor/customer service;
- Demonstrate how we apply best practices to achieve goals and objectives, keeping our mission and vision in mind.

Perhaps the most daunting aspect of any new job is learning new information – about the workplace, coworkers, and clients. This is particularly true for Welcome Center employees, who in addition to learning the daily routine of a center, finds that there is a tremendous amount of information about Louisiana yet to be assimilated.

We hope this publication will make that task easier for all of our employees.



*The words HE/HIS are subjective and possessive case pronouns are used in this document to reference an employee. These words are used for the purpose of convenience and are not intended to discriminate against female employees.*

***Every employee of the Welcome Center Program in the Louisiana Office of Tourism is responsible for knowing the contents of this manual and following the guidelines, rules, policies, and procedures herein, as well as those contained in the official Employee Handbook for the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.***

***This manual is intended to complement and supplement the official Employee Handbook issued to all employees of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism; it is not intended to be a substitute for the DCRT Handbook. Your Supervisor will provide you with a copy of the Employee Handbook, or show you how to access it on the DCRT Intranet site, Channel Z. Questions should be directed to your Supervisor.***

## **MISSION:**

It is the mission of the Louisiana Welcome Center Program to provide a safe, friendly environment in which to welcome visitors and provide them with information about area attractions, and encourage them to spend more time in the state.

## **VISION:**

It is the vision of the staff and management of the Louisiana Welcome Center Program to have each visitor to our centers leave with a more positive impression of our state than when they arrived. Our visitors will leave with every motivation to see more of Louisiana, to stay longer and spend more money; to tell their friends what a wonderful experience they had, and a promise to return soon.

## **VALUES:**

We value truth and knowledge among ourselves and our peers.

We value honesty in our colleagues and among our stakeholders.

We will strive to provide the most accurate and up to date information to our visitors with:

- Great pride in our state
- Attention to detail
- The principles of superlative visitor services in mind

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the age of GPS devices, smart phones and apps for virtually everything, Welcome Centers might seem like an unnecessary throwback to the pre-electronic age. That's not the case at all.

Welcome Centers are the most sincere human element left in the traveler's journey. We offer a genuine love for our product and state.

The travel industry is one of the most highly competitive in the world. The information you provide to visitors, and the manner in which you provide it, can make a difference, even if in a small way, to the future well-being of our state.

Each and every visitor is important and deserving of your undivided attention and very best service. Visitors are the reason our jobs exist, they are the purpose of our work, and they are doing us a great service when they decide to spend their disposable income in our state.

You could well be the first impression a visitor has of Louisiana. Your enthusiasm could mean that a visitor will decide to stay another night; visit another attraction, eat in another restaurant. Your love for your state could translate to additional visitors or return visits in the future. You can help make special memories for our visitors by being part of their Louisiana experience.

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## Chain of Command

Secretary of Culture, Recreation, Tourism



Assistant Secretary, Tourism



Deputy Assistant Secretary, Tourism



Welcome Center Program Director



Regional Coordinators  
(Northern and Southern)



Assistant Regional Coordinators  
(Northern, Southern and Capitol Park)



Supervisors



**→ Welcome Center Staff ←**

## **THE INTERNATIONAL VISITOR**

International visitors are a very important part of Louisiana's tourism market. Many international travelers speak little or no English. Extra patience and understanding are necessary in order to give him the information he needs.

Use visual aids (brochures, maps, tour guides and the internet) as much as possible to serve and assist the international visitor.

Keep your sentences and directions as simple as possible when conversing with international visitors. Avoid using slang. Remember, what may be acceptable slang in our culture may be totally unacceptable in theirs. Hand gestures should be used cautiously for the same reason. Be aware that habits, customs and manners in other countries can sometimes differ widely from ours, and be prepared.

## DECLARATION OF POLICY

The Welcome Centers Section of the Louisiana Office of Tourism is a part of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, and as such is subject to the policies outlined in the Employee Handbook of DCRT. This handbook may be found on the Department's intranet website known as Channel Z. If you do not have access to the internet or cannot print out a copy for yourself, your supervisor will gladly assist.

1. Your Welcome Center must set an example of cleanliness. This is deeply appreciated by the traveling public and your center is often the only contact the visitor will have with a state agency. It is imperative that the building is found spotless -- no fingerprints or smudges on the doors, no trash around the building, no dust on baseboards or tables, literature attractively displayed, floors mopped and windows shining. Avoid clutter in the centers and on the counters. Avoid making hand-made signs to provide information to the visitors. Instead use professionally made signs. Signs printed in a readable typeface (font) on plain colored paper with the help of a computer and printers are acceptable, as long as spelling, grammar and syntax are correct.
2. While open to the public, no lengthy visiting or loitering by persons known or unknown will be permitted. Remember, our local and state police are our greatest friends if a problem arises.
3. When possible, two state travel counselors should remain on duty, visible to visitors when they walk in the door. It gives the visitor an unfavorable impression to open the door and see no one. All visitors shall be greeted with a friendly smile and some form of verbal welcome, i.e. "Good morning, someone will be with you in a moment," and point out the coffee service. MAKE SURE THEY SEE A HAPPY FACE.
4. When greeting visitors, utilize the 5-10 rule as a point of reference. When you are within 10 feet of a guest, you acknowledge him/her with at least a nonverbal form of communication (i.e. nod, smile, eye contact). When you are within 5 feet of a guest, you acknowledge him/her with a verbal form of communication (i.e. Hi, Hello).
5. Avoid controversial topics such as religion, politics and racial issues.
6. Private conversations between counselors must wait until there are no visitors in the building.
7. The Louisiana Smoke-Free Act 815 prohibits smoking inside a State building or within 30 feet of a State building.
8. For safety and health reasons it is not permissible to chew gum, eat food or mints, or drink anything behind the counter.



9. Personal reading materials, (such as newspapers, electronic readers, etc.), are not permitted behind the counter during business hours.
10. If requested or needed, custodial employees may hand out tour guides and maps and if the visitor needs further assistance, the custodial employee should refer them to a travel counselor.
11. Personal telephone calls shall be minimal. Tell your caller that you will return the call during your lunch break or after work. Long distance calls are allowed for official business only and only with permission from the Welcome Center Supervisor.
12. If a cell phone is necessary, it must be on silent or vibrate at all times while on duty. You may check the status of messages and return calls in the break room or outside the building only on break or lunch time.
13. Employees in uniform are expected to conduct themselves in a fashion that will reflect favorably on Louisiana and the Office of Tourism, whether in the Welcome Center, on a familiarization tour, at a conference or at any other official function.
14. Refer both internal and external complaints to the Supervisor of your Welcome Center. If the complaint cannot be resolved internally, the Supervisor will proceed with the Chain of Command.
15. Due to health regulations, visitors may not consume meals inside the Welcome Center.
16. The use of illegal drugs, unauthorized alcohol and other controlled or unauthorized substances is not permissible. Please refer to PPM #11, Substance Abuse and Drug-Free Workplace Policy, for more information.
17. The general hours of operation for the Welcome Centers are from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. daily. You are required to be on duty AT YOUR WORK STATION when the doors open promptly at 8:30 a.m.
18. Each employee has 30 minutes for lunch each day. Lunch times are coordinated within each Welcome Center.
19. Employees are eligible for two 15-minute breaks per day. If employees are unable to take their breaks due to working demands or other just causes, break times cannot be used at the beginning or end of shifts to arrive late or leave early. Additionally, breaks not utilized during the regular portion of the workday cannot be transferred to other workdays. The break privilege is not guaranteed and can be taken away.

20. Political, religious, missing child, lost pet and/or other such publications are not permitted inside the centers or exterior restrooms for any reason.
21. Due to health and safety regulations, pets are not allowed inside the Welcome Centers, with the exception of service animals.

## **ETHICS AND DUAL EMPLOYMENT**

PPM #8, Ethics and Dual Employment Policy, applies to all OLG/DCRT employees, regardless of status, including part-time and student employees. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with the Louisiana Code of Governmental Ethics (La. R.S. 42:1101 et seq.) and Louisiana's dual employment prohibitions (La. R.S. 42:61 et seq.).

The State Ethics Commission maintains an interpretive section of its website to help clarify what is and is not ethical here: <http://www.ethics.state.la.us/EthicsPublicationsInfoSheets.aspx>. A Welcome Center employee should never accept any form of gratuity or commission, whether it is offered by a tourism partner or a visitor.

Supplementary employment is addressed in PPM #9, Outside Employment Policy. If you are a full time employee, your position with the Office of Tourism is your priority. If you are part time, regardless of the number of hours worked, you are expected to be flexible in being able to change your assigned shift to best suit the needs of the center.

Any time you are in doubt or have questions about Ethics Commission laws, rulings or the like, please contact the Human Resources Division.

## **PROHIBITED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

The State Constitution prohibits classified state employees from engaging in political activity. Where a violation of political activity restriction occurs, the Department of State Civil Service will take corrective action, up to and including termination.

Prohibited political activity is defined generally as any effort to support or oppose a candidate for election or a political party in an election.

General Circular No. 2011-020, which lists authorized and prohibited activities, is available online at [www.dscs.state.la.us](http://www.dscs.state.la.us). These guidelines apply for any and all elections on the local, state and federal levels.

Any time you are in doubt or have questions about political activity as a state employee or the like, please contact the Human Resources Division.

## **EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE**

The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, to include the Office of Tourism, subscribes to a philosophy of progressive discipline. Generally, minor infractions of Authority policy or other misconduct will result in non-disciplinary corrective measures, such as letters of concern, caution, counseling or reprimand. Repeat infractions will result in more severe action, including reductions in pay, suspensions without pay, demotions and ultimately, removal from the classified service.

Due process pre-deprivation procedures will precede all disciplinary actions in compliance with Chapter 12 of the Civil Service Rules. Additionally, Supervisory Plans may be used to address repeat infractions or crafted to address employee shortcomings. Employees should realize that disciplinary and non-disciplinary actions will be considered in preparing performance evaluations and in evaluating merit increase entitlements.

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## **SPECIAL PROCEDURES**

**LOCKING PROCEDURE:** Two employees are required to secure the building at closing - one to lock, one to check. Indoor restrooms must be checked and secured also. Exceptions are the State Capitol and Capitol Park Welcome Centers.

**KEY CONTROL:** Each supervisor is responsible for the distribution of building keys. A file must be kept so that the supervisor will know how many keys were made and to whom they were issued. Each employee must sign the log and date when the key was issued. Upon separating from service with the Office of Tourism, an employee must sign, date and return key.

**POWER FAILURES:** If the lack of water or electrical power failure requires closure of a Center for one to four hours, consult the **Supervisor** for further instructions.

**ACCIDENTS OR ILLNESS:** The important thing to remember, after the welfare of the injured or sick person, is to avoid saying or doing anything that would cause the Office of Tourism to become involved in a civil action. Employees should assist injured persons in every way possible; obtain ambulance and/or medical service, but should not in any way indicate or imply that the state agency will pay for these or similar services. Records should be made of the person's name, address and the circumstances surrounding the alleged injury or illness. Names and address of witnesses and employees present should be secured and recorded. **Do not leave any detail to memory - write it down.** Use objective language (what you observed) rather than subjective or judgmental terms (What you think seems to have happened.)

The proper police authorities should be notified of serious injuries, regardless of whether the injury occurs on DOTD or Office of Tourism property. If an accident involving the death or personal injury of a guest or an employee occurs on Center premises, the Baton Rouge office should be notified immediately. At the State Capitol and Capitol Park Welcome Centers, the Capitol Police handle all emergencies.

**FIRE:** In case of fire, call the fire department or 911 (if available in your area) immediately. All persons should be evacuated as quickly as possible. If it is safe to do so, an extinguisher should be used to put out the blaze. Evacuation routes must be posted in the Welcome Center.

**NATURAL DISASTERS:** In the event of a crisis affecting the State of Louisiana, the Department's main responsibilities will be to coordinate and disseminate accurate information to the media, local visitor industry and customers.

The Office of Tourism Emergency Preparedness Plan is updated annually, and contains a section specifically describing emergency preparations needed at Welcome Centers. Each supervisor will dedicate a staff meeting to reviewing both the general Emergency Preparedness Plan, and the Welcome Center Emergency Plan. A copy of the Welcome Center Plan will be provided to each employee. A copy of the current Office of Tourism Plan will be maintained by the Supervisor in a location readily and easily available to employees.

**BREAK-INS OR THEFT:** In the event of a break-in at your Center or if articles of value are stolen, notify the proper authorities at once. If there is damage, vandalism or missing articles are noted, do not touch, move or clean up until authorities have completed their on-site investigation and fingerprinting. Always get a copy of the police report. The State Capitol Police handle all incidents at the State Capitol and Capitol Park Welcome Centers.

**FLAG PROCEDURES:** All flags are to be flown at full staff except for the following conditions.

- Death of a statewide elected official.
- Death of a federal nationwide elected official.
- Any directive issued by the Baton Rouge office.
- Answers about flag display may be found at:  
<http://www.usflag.org/flagetiquette.html>

**REPORT ALL INCIDENTS:** Be familiar with the proper accident/incident forms that must be filled out and where they are kept in your office. Complete forms and send to the Baton Rouge office immediately. Failure to do so may cause delays in processing or even void insurance protection. At the State Capitol and Capitol Park Welcome Centers the Capitol Police handle all incidents.

**EMERGENCY NUMBERS:** It is imperative that you have fire and police numbers readily accessible at all times. Welcome Center emergency numbers should be site specific and posted in a convenient location at the Welcome Centers.

**UNUSUAL OCCURANCES:** Any unusual or out of the ordinary occurrences should be reported to the Supervisor. Describe and document the occurrence as accurately as possible. Secure witnesses and provide their names and addresses. At the State Capitol and Capitol Park Welcome Centers the Capitol Police are called to handle all incidents.

## **UNIFORM POLICY STATEMENT**

Your uniform is important for several reasons. First, a better impression is achieved when the employees are attractively dressed in career apparel. Second, a uniformed employee definitely enhances the visitor's impression of Louisiana. The uniform commands the respect of the public. Information given is accepted as more authoritative when it comes from one in uniform. The uniform is a means of identification and is to be worn when on duty unless otherwise instructed.

It is the responsibility of the employee to keep the uniform in such a manner that a proper appearance is maintained at all times.

The uniform worn by Office of Tourism personnel represents an organization of which we are justly proud. The manner in which the uniform is worn will reflect favorably or unfavorably upon the employee as well as the agency. The rules set down herein are intended to help not only the employee in wearing the proper uniform, but are also intended to improve the overall visibility and positive public impression of the organization. Any part of uniform provided by the state shall **not** be worn by any state employee when **off duty, attending any after hour function, or appointment**, unless the activity involves participating as an official representative of the Office of Tourism and/or Welcome Centers section.

*For specific guidelines on current uniform pieces, refer to the **Addendum** at the end of the handbook.*



## **GUIDELINES FOR WEARING THE STATE UNIFORM**

1. Travel counselors are to wear coordinated pieces each day. Each supervisor is responsible for providing a weekly uniform schedule.
2. Uniforms shall be kept neat, clean and in good repair at all times. Follow manufacturer's recommendations for laundering and cleaning.
3. The Louisiana name pin should be worn when an employee is on duty if provided.
4. Until the official uniform can be issued, all new travel counselors shall wear a solid colored (as designated by Supervisor) shirt or blouse and Navy, black or khaki pants.
5. Custodial workers should wear clothing loose enough to enable them to perform the bending, stooping, lifting, etc., as required by the obligations of their duties.
6. The uniform issues and replacements are contingent upon budgetary appropriations each year and are, therefore, subject to change. Uniforms are considered a condition of employment and are not considered employment incentives.
7. In the event of loss or damage through negligence, the individual shall be obligated to replace the items at his own expense.
8. **ALL UNIFORMS ARE THE PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA.** When an employee leaves the employment of the state for any reason, all uniform pieces must be returned to the center supervisor. Legal deductions from an employee's final paycheck and other lawful measures will be taken to recoup the value of any property retained by the employee.
9. Uniforms shall not be worn in an attempt to gain favorable consideration in purchasing anything of value or to receive free admission, gifts or gratuities.

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

**All employees shall exercise personal hygiene at all times.**

1. Minimum and conservative jewelry (i.e. rings, earrings, watches, and bracelets) should be worn.
2. No **visible** tattoos or body piercing is permitted (i.e. nose, tongue, eye area, lips).
3. No open-toed shoes are permitted for safety reasons.
4. Sideburns, beards and/or mustaches shall be neat, clean and well trimmed.
5. Nails shall be kept well manicured and at a professional length.
6. Extreme or elaborate hairstyles shall not be worn while on duty.

## ADDENDUM 1

### GUIDELINES FOR UNIFORMS ISSUED BETWEEN 10.1.2011 AND 1.31.2012:

- ❖ Blue oxford shirts, men and women
  - Sleeves may be worn with cuffs buttoned or unbuttoned and rolled up.
  - Men should always tuck the shirt into their pants, and wear a belt.
  - Tie is optional for men.
  - Women may wear the shirt buttoned and tucked in, or unbuttoned and not tucked with a plain white, black or navy blue shell or turtleneck underneath.
  - Scarves, jewelry and other accessories should be appropriate to the business-casual nature of the uniform pieces and not have the logo of another entity visible.
- ❖ Red Polo Shirts, men and women
  - Red polos may be worn tucked in or untucked.
  - A belt shall be worn when the polo shirt is tucked.
- ❖ The women's Navy blue sweaters are provided for the comfort of staff during cold temperatures. When the sweater is worn, the nametag should be affixed to the sweater.
- ❖ Pants and skirts
  - Three colors of pants and skirts are permitted with uniform pieces:
    - Standard Khaki
    - Black
    - Navy Blue
  - Pants should be of a standard length, ("ankle length") not cropped length.
  - Pants should be of a standard cut and construction, and may be pleated or unpleated.
  - Skirts may not be any shorter than 3" above the knee when seated.
  - Fabric should be of a smooth, simple texture, such as gabardine or microfiber.
- ❖ Footwear
  - Hosiery is permitted and encouraged; not required.
  - Tights are acceptable during colder months; footed or unfooted.

- Athletic shoes are permitted, as long as they are clean and in good condition, because travel counselors often spend many hours standing.

From time to time, variations on these guidelines are acceptable and even encouraged. Your supervisor will play a key role in making these decisions. These occasions may include but are not limited to Mardi Gras and Halloween, collegiate and professional athletic events, Tourism Week activities, jeans or shorts days.

All state issued pieces shall be laundered in cold water and dried and/or pressed according to manufacturer's recommendations for a neater appearance.



## State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM  
OFFICE OF TOURISM

JAY DARDENNE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

CHARLES R. DAVIS  
DEPUTY SECRETARY

LEANNE WEILL  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

### PLEASE SIGN, DATE AND RETURN TO THE SUPERVISOR

I have received, read and understand the guidelines, policies and information as issued by the Louisiana Office of Tourism in the Welcome Center Employee Handbook Policies and Procedures and agree to abide by the terms and provisions thereof.

Employee Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Welcome Center \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_