

## **SERENITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>POLITICAL ACTIVITY</b>
<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b>	<b>HR-49</b>
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	<b>May 1998</b>
<b>SUPERSEDES:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>LAST REVISION DATE:</b>	<b>July 2009</b>

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### **POLICY:**

It is the policy of Serenity Behavioral Health Systems (SBHS) that employees of SBHS are protected from undue political pressure, influence or coercion by Federal and State laws as well as SBHS policy. The same laws and policy limit political activity while assuring that the right to participate in the political process is preserved. The provisions of this policy apply to all SBHS employees.

### **AUTHORIZED POLITICAL ACTIVITY:**

SBHS employees may do the following:

- I. Register and vote in any election.
- II. Promote and encourage other persons to exercise their right to vote.
- III. Express a personal opinion privately and publicly on political candidates and issues, provided that any public expression does not conflict with any laws or policy and is not under color of office or position.
- IV. Display a political picture, badge or button as long as such display is not under color of office or position or while on duty or on state property.
- V. Display a political bumper sticker on a privately owned vehicle upon which the state is not paying transportation mileage.
- VI. Offer for and hold any elective or appointive office of a political subdivision of the state, political party, or political organization provided the office is not full-time, does not conflict with the performance of the employees' official duties, and is not otherwise prohibited by law.
- VII. Participate in the non-partisan activities of a civic, community, social, professional, employee or similar organization.
- VIII. Be a member of a political party or other organization and participate in its activities to the extent permitted by Federal and State laws and/or policy.

**SUBJECT: Political Activity**

**Policy: HR-49**

**Page 2 of 5**

- IX. Attend partisan and non-partisan political meetings and rallies as a spectator.
- X. Sign a petition for specific legislative action or to place a candidate's name on an election ballot.
- XI. Be active in connection with such questions as constitutional amendments, referenda, approval of municipal ordinances or other questions or issues of a similar character.
- XII. Serve as a non-partisan paid worker at the polls in an election.
- XIII. Participate fully in public affairs in a manner, which does not materially compromise their efficiency or integrity as employees, or the neutrality, efficiency or integrity of SBHS.
- XIV. Write a personal letter to a newspaper or other publication expressing a personal view on public issues.
- XV. Contribute to a governmental program for financing Federal, State or local elections as permitted by Federal or State laws.
- XVI. Direct, manage, control, participate in, contribute to and accept contributions for their own campaigns for any office permitted by laws and policy.

**PROHIBITED POLITICAL ACTIVITY:**

SBHS employees prohibited from engaging in the following political activities:

- I. Political activities of any nature during work hours.
- II. Political activities of any nature while on work premises.
- III. Solicitation of other employees for any political purpose, whether or not during work hours or on work premises.
- IV. Retaliation against any employee for engaging in permissible political activity.
- V. Holding or being a candidate for any political office, except as provided in Section 8.200.
- VI. Directing, managing, controlling, or participating in a political campaign for state office or for office in the county of the employee's employing unit, except as provided in Section 8.200.

**SUBJECT: Political Activity**

**Policy: HR-49**

**Page 3 of 5**

- VII. Serving as a watcher, challenger, or similar partisan worker in any election.
- VIII. Seeking, using, or attempting to use any coercive political pressure to secure for themselves or any other person an appointment, promotion, salary increase or any other employment advantage.
- IX. Using or promising to use, directly or indirectly, any official authority or influence to influence the political action of any other person, or to affect the results of a nomination, campaign or election to any public office, political party office, or an office of a political organization.
- X. Using or promising to use, directly or indirectly, any official authority or influence to influence the political action of any other person, or to affect the results of a nomination, campaign or election to any public office, political party office, or an office of a political organization.
- XI. Personally and knowingly endorsing or opposing candidates for state office or for office in the county of the employee's employer or residence in a political advertisement, broadcast, campaign literature rally or similar means of mass communication.
- XII. Circulating a recall petition.
- XIII. Transporting any political campaign literature or matter, or engage in soliciting votes, or transport any person or persons soliciting votes in any election or primary while traveling in a vehicle upon which SBHS is paying transportation mileage.

**FEDERAL HATCH POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ACT:**

In addition to the prohibitions in this policy, an employee whose principal employment is in connection with an activity which is financed in whole or in part by loans or grants made by the United States or a federal agency is covered by the

**SUBJECT: Political Activity**

**Policy: HR-49**

**Page 4 of 5**

Federal Hatch Political Activities Act (5 U.S.C.A. §1501-1508). Such employees, as a matter of federal law, may not:

- I. Use official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or nomination for office.
- II. Directly or indirectly coerce, attempt to coerce, command or advise a State or local officer or employee to pay, lend or contribute anything of value to a party, committee, organization, agency or person for political purposes.
- III. Be a candidate for public elective office in a partisan election, which may include some part-time offices of local subdivisions of the State.

**GENERAL PROVISIONS:**

- I. Employees are personally responsible for ascertaining whether they are eligible for appointment or election to a public office, political party office, or an office of a political organization. Part of this responsibility includes determining whether their positions are funded wholly or partly by loans or grants of an agency of the United States.
- II. Employees must complete the Request for Political Activity Authorization Form and submit through appropriate lines of authority to the Chief Executive Officer to request a review and approval of potential political activity.
- III. The request form is to be approved or denied in a timely manner. If denied, a reason for denial should be included on the request form.
- IV. The original is to be maintained by the Chief Executive Officer and a copy is to be returned to the employee.

**OFFERING FOR AND HOLDING PUBLIC OFFICE:**

An employee other than an agency head may offer for and hold any elective or appointive office of a political subdivision of the state, political party, or political organization; provided, the office is not full-time, does not conflict with the performance of the employee's official duties, and is not otherwise prohibited by law.

**REMEDIAL PROVISIONS:**

**SUBJECT: Political Activity**

**Policy: HR-49**

**Page 5 of 5**

Any applicant or employee who seeks, uses or attempts to use any coercive political pressure to secure an advantage in the employment process shall be disqualified for appointment or subject to appropriate disciplinary action

- I. Any employee shall resign from employment or shall be terminated by the appointing authority upon becoming a candidate for any:
  - A. Full-time elective public office of a political subdivision of this state or any other state;
  - B. Full-time elective office of a political party or political organization;
  - C. Elective state office of this state or any other state;
  - D. Elective civil office of the federal government.
  
- II. Candidacy for office shall be conclusively presumed whenever an employee personally engages in any political meetings, canvassing, solicitation of votes, solicitation of campaign funds or in any manner which may reasonably be construed as offering a personal candidacy for office.
  
- III. No question shall be so framed as to attempt to elicit the political, social or religious affiliations of any applicant, eligible or employee. All voluntary disclosures thereon shall be discountenanced, and there shall be no discrimination because of such opinions or affiliations; provided, however, that this paragraph shall not be construed to prohibit such inquiries, questionnaires or related documents as may be required by the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1953 (Ga. Laws 1953, p. 216, as amended) or other valid federal or state law.
  
- IV. Any employee who engages in prohibited political activity will be subject to prompt disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

**REFERENCES:**

- I. Federal Law (5 U.S.C. Section 1501-1508 – Hatch Political Activities Act)
- II. State Law (O.C.G.A. Section 45-10-70 – Holding Office)
- III. Rules of the State Personnel Board – Rule 8

**ATTACHMENT:**

- I. [Request For Political Activity Authorization](#) SBHS Form 603

**APPROVAL SECTION:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Executive Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SUBJECT: Political Activity**  
**Policy: HR-49**  
**Page 6 of 5**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RESCISSION SECTION:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Executive Officer

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Date

**REVIEW SECTION:**

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Committee Chairperson

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Date

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Committee Chairperson

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Date

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Committee Chairperson

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Date