

# Does your nonprofit employee handbook reflect the policies you actually follow?

By Karen Maciorowski, MBA, CAE, Chief Operating Officer, Connecticut Association of Nonprofits

**H**as re-writing your handbook been a project you've dreaded and put off for a long time? It is one of the most stressful jobs, often delegated to human resources staff to handle. Where do you start?

Last year I was charged with re-writing our employee handbook, on top of my already full-time job. I'm not a lawyer, and I know that staff was going to have to live by this handbook for years to come. It was a very daunting task that I procrastinated on for as long as possible. When I could no longer procrastinate, I developed a plan – and I'm sharing that plan with you now in hopes that it might make your role a bit easier.

1. I began by obtaining a copy of the Nonprofit Employee Handbook, a template handbook written by Gabriel Jiran and Gary Starr, lawyers with Shipman and Goodwin, LLC. They have donated their expertise in employment law to craft an employee handbook especially for nonprofits and have provided biannual updates.

2. I then collected sample handbooks from board members, similar nonprofit associations to ours across the nation, and from a few associations we belong to like American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

3. I met with staff and asked them about the current handbook: what worked and what didn't work; what they thought needed to be added; and how enforcement it could be modified.

4. I attended a workshop conducted by the authors of the Nonprofit Employee Handbook about composing the handbook. I left armed with knowledge and a confirmed plan.

5. With the information above, I reviewed the table of contents of our handbook, outlined a plan of policies to add, and ones to eliminate. I then reviewed the current handbook and highlighted policies that needed work.

6. I met with our Governance Committee of the Board to check in with them and receive guidance on my plan to proceed.

7. I methodically reviewed policy by policy, utilizing the template that was written already in legal terms, and customized it to our organization. While I was surprised at how many of the sample handbooks from our board began with the handbook template, I was happy to see the template

work so well for so many different types of nonprofits.

## My advice to you:

1. Purchase the Nonprofit Employee Handbook on our website at [www.ctnonprofits.org/publications](http://www.ctnonprofits.org/publications) for a nominal charge of \$40 for members and \$60 for non-members. The 2011 updated version will be released in August and will be sent to anyone that purchases the 2009 version in May – August.

2. AND/OR attend the workshop that the authors of the handbook are conducting on August 25, 2011 and learn first-hand how to attack this very important responsibility. You will receive a free copy of the handbook with your attendance!

## COMPOSING EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS for NONPROFITS

This workshop will focus on "Writing Employee Handbooks" and features guest speaker Gabriel Jiran and Gary Starr, attorneys from Shipman & Goodwin and co-authors of the NEWLY UPDATED 2011

Nonprofit Employee Handbook published by CT Nonprofits. This workshop will be a hands-on review of key policies and provisions of employee handbooks. Participants will review examples of draft policies and provisions; learn the significance of the language in employment disputes; learn strategies in developing and revising language in order to address common problems in the workplace; and discuss recent developments that may require revisions of existing policies. Bring your handbook and/or policies to the forum. You will receive a complimentary electronic copy of the 2011 Nonprofit Employee Handbook (a \$40 - \$60 value) upon paid registration and attendance.

Thursday, August 25 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

CT Nonprofits, Hartford

Member: \$60; Nonmember: \$80

Code: CEH – REGISTER at

[www.ctnonprofits.org](http://www.ctnonprofits.org) or

by calling 860.525.5080

Trainer: Gabriel Jiran, Shipman & Goodwin and Gary Starr, Shipman and Goodwin at [www.shipmangoodwin.com](http://www.shipmangoodwin.com)

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