

Management Guidelines for EAC Representation

Frequently Asked Questions

The **E**mployees' **A**dvisory **C**ouncil was established in the late 1960s and officially sanctioned in 1975 by the Pinellas County Unified Personnel Act: Chapter 75-488, Laws of Florida. (This law was later replaced by Chapter 77-642). The EAC serves in an advisory capacity to the Pinellas County Personnel Board concerning personnel matters, policies, rules, and regulations affecting Pinellas County employees.



The EAC's mission is "to continually improve the Pinellas County classified employees' quality of work life by interacting cooperatively with the Appointing Authorities, advocating the views of classified employees, and by delivering candid, effective feedback to the Personnel Board on how employees perceive proposed Board actions affecting them." The EAC aims to benefit all county employees—classified and exempt.

Q: How is the EAC organized?

A: The EAC consists of 15 elected representatives and numerous delegates serving close to 3,500 classified employees in Pinellas County's Unified Personnel System. Employees from various Departments under the County Administrator elect 8 of the representatives, the Clerk of the Circuit Court elects 2, and the Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections, Tax Collector, Management Information Services & "Other Appointing Authorities" elect 1 each. Council members serve two-year terms. Delegates serve one-year terms

Q: How are the employees represented?

A: The EAC structure includes delegates at every work site throughout the County. These delegates act as an up-and-down communication link between employees at their work locations and the Council's representatives. Delegates are not elected. They are appointed through an informal process that determines an individual's willingness to serve in that role. More than 100 delegates provide a link from classified employees to the 15 representatives who serve on the Council. Serving as a delegate can help prepare an employee to function effectively in the role of representative.

Q: How does the EAC operate?

A: Elected council representatives meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month and hold occasional special meetings to discuss and make recommendations on various personnel issues. Council representatives and delegates meet every 2 months to share information and discuss strategies.

Q. What typically happens at an EAC meeting?

A. EAC Representatives establish goals through discussion of ideas received from employees, delegates, and representatives. The goals are then assigned to Council volunteers or sub-committees. They work with the Personnel Department and County management to reach a mutually acceptable solution. Guest speakers also occasionally attend meetings to address a variety of employee issues relating to policy, benefits, current and upcoming events, proposed legislation, and other matters that impact employees.

Q. Is the EAC represented on the Personnel Board?

A. The EAC appoints two members of the seven-member Personnel Board.

Q. What do I do if an employee who reports to me wants to become an EAC Representative or Delegate?

A. First, remember that the EAC is sanctioned by Florida law and fully supported by County management. You are expected, in turn, to fully support your employee's interest. Next, determine with the employee whether or not her level of involvement might negatively impact the employee's ability to fulfill job responsibilities or the unit's ability to carry out its mission. Unless there is compelling evidence to support either case, you should support the employee's involvement.

Q. If an employee who reports to me becomes an EAC Representative or Delegate, what is a reasonable amount of time for him/her to spend on that function?

A. The amount of time that would be considered "reasonable" varies based on a number of factors. Representatives have more frequent meetings than delegates. Elected officers require more time to fulfill their duties than other representatives. EAC members who have larger or more spread out constituencies may need more time to coordinate the flow of information with fellow employees. The EAC may be working on specific goals that require additional work and establish sub-committees. And, finally, there may be a "hot issue" that calls for gauging employee sentiment or frequent communication. As a supervisor, you must, therefore, rely on your judgment to determine what is "reasonable." It may very well need to be more than "a couple of hours a week." It should certainly not rise to the level of taking up the bulk of an employee's week. The answer lies somewhere in between.

Q. If I provide an email address to an EAC representative or delegate from my organization who otherwise would not have one, how may I restrict its use?

A. Like all other employees, the representative or delegate must observe Pinellas County's Information Security Policy and any Electronic Media Policy that may have been established for your organization. For operational purposes, you may choose to restrict the employee's access to a computer to certain times and the use of email may be restricted to EAC matters only. Consider, however, allowing email communication for all other business matters and providing access to the email account at least once each day. In any case, be sure to fully inform the representative or delegate of all restrictions that apply.

Q. Is it OK to track the time an employee spends on EAC functions?

A. You may track the time an employee spends on EAC functions during scheduled work hours. Remember, however, that the EAC is a County work-related function. It should not be treated any differently than other functions that are considered as regular work time.

Q. May I require an employee to inform me of every EAC meeting he/she attends?

A. When you approve an employee's participation in the EAC either as a delegate or representative, you are essentially agreeing to his participation in a set number of meetings. The time and date for those meetings are established at the beginning of each year. Once you have that information, there should be no reason to require the employee to further notify you of his attendance. He is expected to be there. The employee should, however, notify you of any ad hoc or sub-committee meetings he is required to attend.

Q. May I deny an employee from attending an EAC meeting?

A. Yes. As management you are responsible for managing your employee's time and ensuring that the work of your department or area is completed. However, once you approve an employee's participation in the EAC, you are essentially approving her attendance at established meetings. The employee should only be prevented from attending if there is a genuine work emergency that would imperil the organization's ability to fulfill a critical function.

Q. What do I do when a Representative or Delegate wants to schedule meetings with the employees she represents?

A. First, inquire as to whether the meeting is really necessary. Could the objective be accomplished by other means? (The same analysis you would conduct prior to calling a meeting yourself.) If meetings should be held, how long or how frequent they should be again depends on a number of factors and circumstances. Work with the delegate or representative to determine what would be reasonable. A ten-minute meeting may not be enough (employees need an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered). A two-hour meeting may be an undue disruption to your operations. The answer, as before, lies somewhere in between.

Q. If a Representative or Delegate chooses to conduct EAC business on his own time, must I compensate him?

A. No. In this situation, the activities, while County sanctioned, are not directly job-related. The employee should perform these functions on official time. If, however, the amount of time devoted becomes too burdensome, the employee may choose to use some of his own time. That is at his discretion. Management cannot deny it nor, in that case, should it count as hours worked.