

Guidelines for EAC Representatives and Delegates

Frequently Asked Questions

The **Employees' Advisory Council** 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 is a reasonable amount of time for me to spend on EAC functions?

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. If you have larger or more spread out constituencies, you 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. You must, therefore, use 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 your week. The answer lies somewhere in between. In any case, take steps to ensure that it does not interfere with your ability to perform your regularly assigned duties.

Q. How much do I need to keep my supervisor informed of the time I spend on EAC functions?

A. Your supervisor has a right to be kept informed of the time you devote to EAC activities. Make sure she is provided with a schedule of EAC meetings for the year. She may also need to be occasionally reminded that you are planning to attend these meetings as the day approaches. It would also be in your best interest, once you have established a “level of effort” for your EAC activities to make her aware of the occasional times when that level of activity rises if it could potentially impact your ability to meet certain job expectations. And, certainly, make sure she is informed of any special or ad hoc meetings that are EAC related.

Q. Is it OK for my supervisor to track the time I spend on EAC functions?

A. Your supervisor has the right to track the time you spend on EAC functions during scheduled work hours. However, the EAC is a County work-related function and should not be treated any differently than other county related functions. Time spent on EAC activities which occur during your regular work time are considered as time worked.

Q. Can my supervisor keep me from attending an EAC meeting?

A. Yes. Your supervisor is responsible for managing your time and ensuring that the work of your department or area is completed. However, due to the importance of EAC functions, you 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. If you disagree with your supervisor's judgment on this issue, you may appeal to upper management or to the Personnel Department.

Q. I want to schedule meetings with the employees I represent. Is that OK and what should I do?

A. First, ask yourself whether the meeting is really necessary. Could the objective be accomplished by other means (like a memo or email)? If you feel meetings should be held, work with affected management to determine how long or how frequent they should be. 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 operations. Discuss the issue with management before meeting with employees and strive to reach agreement on a reasonable amount of time that balances both needs.

Q. Is it OK for me to conduct EAC business on my own time?

A. Yes. But remember that you are expected to perform these functions on official time. If, however, you find the amount of time devoted to EAC activities too burdensome or it is affecting your performance, you have the discretion to either ask to be relieved of your role or to use some of your own time. You are not encouraged to do so, but it remains at your discretion. If that is your choice, your time spent does not count as hours worked and you will not be compensated for it.

Q. What do I do when an employee wants me to bring forth an issue to the EAC council that does not appear to have broad application?

A. The EAC's purpose is to deal with issues that affect broad categories of employees. If it appears to you that an employee wants the EAC to address an issue that applies only to that individual or to just his department or work group, be sure to lend a sympathetic ear, but point out to the employee that those issues are best handled through their management chain, either informally or through the grievance procedure.

Q. Does the Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Law apply to EAC functions?

A. In some cases. The County Attorney's office has rendered an opinion that the law applies to EAC Representatives but not to Delegates. That means anytime two or more EAC representatives discuss some matter on which foreseeable action will be taken by the council, it must be in a previously announced public meeting. It does not apply to any conversation between an EAC Representative and one or more EAC Delegates. More detailed information is provided in a separate document titled "Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Law Frequently Asked Questions and Do's and Don'ts."

Q. What is recorded before and after EAC meetings?

A. Official minutes of all EAC meetings are maintained by the EAC Secretary and published by the Personnel Department. In 2003, the EAC started tape recording all regularly scheduled meetings for purposes of assisting the Secretary in compiling the minutes. These tape recordings are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules. The EAC Secretary then uses the recording to recap and summarize the main points and decisions covered during the meeting into a set of written minutes that are reviewed for accuracy by the EAC Chairman, Personnel's EAC Liaison, and the Director of Personnel prior to being published.

Q. If I am provided with an email address as a result of my role as an EAC representative or delegate, how may I use it?

A. Remember that any email access provided to you by Pinellas County is intended for business purposes only and is subject to the Public Records Laws of the State of Florida. If you did not have an email address prior to becoming an EAC representative or delegate, then its primary purpose is so employees can communicate with you on EAC matters and your access to a computer may be limited to certain times by your management. In some cases, your use of the email will be restricted to EAC matters. In others, employees will be able to communicate with you on other business matters. Your management will inform you of these restrictions. In either case, you must observe Pinellas County's Information Security Policy and any Electronic Media Policy that may have been established by your Appointing Authority. If you are not sure about the proper uses for email, consult established county and departmental policies or check with your supervisor.