



**WORKSITE WELLNESS INCLUDING SELF-CARE AND PHYSICAL  
FITNESS LEAVE POLICY**

**1. PURPOSE**

The New Mexico Judicial Branch (NMJB) supports a work environment that enhances employee effectiveness and overall well-being and health. This policy is developed to promote and support the physical and mental well-being of NMJB judicial officers and employees through a comprehensive worksite wellness program and increase employee health and productivity.

**2. REFERENCES**

- The State of New Mexico Employee Assistance Provider:  
<https://www.guidanceresources.com/groWeb/login/login.xhtml?logout=true>
- State of New Mexico Group Benefits Plan: <https://www.mybenefitsnm.com/>
- <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/>
- NMJB Personnel Rules 5.03 & 19.03 Administrative Leave

**3. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Administrative Authority** – Individual or designee with the primary responsibility to supervise and coordinate the administration of a judicial entity, or as designated by the Chief Judge and approved by the Supreme Court Order.
- B. Administrative Leave** – Paid leave authorized by the Chief Justice or Administrative Authority.
- C. Burnout** – A reaction to prolonged or chronic job stress and is characterized by three main dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism (less identification with the job), and feelings of reduced professional ability.
- D. Mental Health First Aid** – Mental health crisis training to identify, understand, and respond to signs of addiction and mental illness.
- E. Physical Fitness Activities** – Include walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling, and aerobic exercise; flexibility and/or muscular strength activities such as calisthenics, yoga,



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and recreational sports such as tennis, volleyball, softball, and racquetball. The term physical fitness activities do not include health-related activities such as physical therapy, which would normally require the use of paid time off or PTO or other accrued leave.

- F. **Self-care** – Engaging in activities that promote well-being and reduce stress leading to a more vibrant life.

#### **4. GENERAL POLICY**

The NMJB worksite wellness program provides judicial officers and employees a path towards wellbeing. The policy encourages healthy habits as steps towards building and sustaining a highly productive workforce. The worksite wellness program will help increase employee awareness of health conditions and establish ways to combat and address those conditions. This includes traditional health, fitness, and wellness such as physical fitness programs. It also includes self-care activities to help implement work-life balance. The judicial officers and employees of the NMJB are its most valuable resource and an investment in their health and well-being is essential for the successful operations of the judiciary.

#### **5. BENEFITS OF A WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM**

The benefits of a worksite wellness program include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Improves Health:** A healthy lifestyle leads to decreased incidents of chronic disease, increased employee satisfaction, and increased health engagement.
2. **Increased Productivity:** One of the main causes of reduced employee productivity is poor health. Healthy employees have more energy and are more motivated in, and out of, the workplace.
3. **Better Focus and Engagement:** Wellness initiatives lead to greater focus and motivation. A wellness culture creates a focused and engaged workforce.
4. **Reduces Stress:** Stress is unhealthy for employees and employers alike. A wellness program can combat workplace stress, which leads to decreased absenteeism and an overall healthier workforce.
5. **Improved Employee Retention:** A healthy stress-free employee is more likely to stay with their company and enjoy improved morale. A wellness program has a strong positive impact on employee retention.
6. **Lower Health Care Costs:** Healthy behaviors lead to lower health risks, and lower health risks lead to less chronic disease. With less chronic disease, employees have fewer health care costs.



**6. MENTAL HEALTH FIRST-AID AND MENTAL HEALTH SELF-CARE**

**MENTAL HEALTH FIRST-AID**

Mental Health First Aid is a training course that teaches judicial officers and employees on how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse. Mental Health First-Aid introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health concerns, builds understanding of their impact, and provides an overview of common treatments. It is important for the health and well-being of judicial officers and employees to be aware of the signs and signals of mental health concerns in ourselves and others to correctly approach a crisis, listen non-judgmentally, provide support and information, and encourage professional help if needed.

- A.** Judicial officers and employees are encouraged to attend an 8-hour Mental Health First-Aid training course. Why get trained in Mental Health First-Aid?
- 1. Be prepared:** When a mental health crisis happens, know what to do.
  - 2. Mental illnesses are common:** 1 in 5 adults suffer from mental health issues.
  - 3. You can help:** People with mental illnesses often suffer alone.
  - 4. You care:** Be there for a friend, family member, or colleague.
  - 5. Provide managers with training:** to help recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and depression in team members and encourage them to seek help from qualified mental health professionals.
  - 6. Normalize discussions of mental health.**
- B.** Employees who are interested in becoming trained in Mental Health First Aid may request from their Administrative Authority up to eight (8) hours of administrative leave to attend Mental Health First-Aid training. *See the web link above for available training.*

**MENTAL HEALTH SELF-CARE**

Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Self-care encourages self-improvement. It promotes rest and relaxation, which benefits our overall health and wellness, and it also, promotes healthy relationships. When our self-esteem and self-awareness improves, it has a positive effect on our overall mindset. The NMJB recognizes the benefits of mental health self-care in creating and maintaining a productive, healthy, and harmonious work environment and encourages each employee to take advantage of this provision to enhance his or her mental health.

- A.** All judicial officers and employees (including at-will and probationary employees) may request one (1) hour per workweek to engage in Self-Care Wellness activities.



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- B.** Employees who participate in Self-Care can request one (1) hour of administrative leave per week from their supervisor. The one (1) hour can be taken in increments, such as two (2) thirty minutes for Self-Care activities. Administrative leave for Self-Care is separate and in addition to any approved physical fitness leave.
- C.** Self-Care can occur at a regularly scheduled pre-approved date and time, or in response to high-stress situations.
- D.** Self-Care should not interfere with the performance of job duties or other obligations or NMJB operations.

**7. PHYSICAL FITNESS LEAVE**

It is the policy of the New Mexico Judicial Branch (NMJB) to allow each employee to request up to thirty (30) minutes of physical fitness leave three (3) times per week or forty-five (45) minutes of physical fitness leave two (2) times per week to participate in physical fitness activities. The NMJB recognizes the benefits of physical fitness in creating and maintaining a productive, healthy, and harmonious work environment and encourages each employee to take advantage of this provision to enhance his or her physical fitness.

**8. PHYSICAL FITNESS LEAVE PROVISIONS**

- A.** Employees may request up to thirty (30) minutes of physical fitness leave three (3) times per week or forty-five (45) minutes of physical fitness leave two (2) times per week, to engage in physical fitness activities.
- B.** Employees shall request time under this policy by completing a physical fitness contract and submitting the contract to his or her supervisor for approval.
- C.** Supervisors shall evaluate and approve/disapprove employee contracts ensuring that workload requirements are met first.
- D.** A supervisor may deny or suspend a physical fitness contract when, in his or her discretion, the workload is anticipated to be particularly high, when approval will cause a scheduling hardship, when an employee's performance is or becomes less than satisfactory, if the provisions of this policy are abused, or if the operational needs of the judicial entity and staffing do not support the approval.

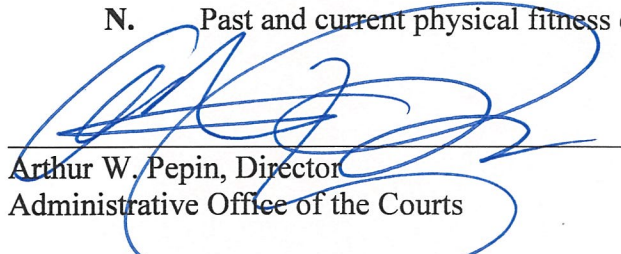


**NEW MEXICO JUDICIAL BRANCH**

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- E.** At no time shall the existence of an approved physical fitness contract supersede the needs of the NMJB or the assignments and responsibilities of the employee's position; an employee's job responsibilities must always come first.
- F.** A physical fitness contract shall apply for 90 days, beginning on the date it is approved by the employee's supervisor. A contract may be modified during this period provided the provisions of this policy are met and the employee's supervisor agrees to the modification. It is the employee's responsibility to initiate a new physical fitness contract when the previous contract expires.
- G.** An employee may elect to forego a scheduled period of physical fitness activity; however, missed physical fitness periods may not be accumulated or taken during subsequent weeks. A missed fitness period may be made up at another time during the same week provided prior approval of the employee's supervisor is obtained. Physical fitness periods may not be accumulated.
- H.** Physical activities may be scheduled around the lunch period. Physical fitness leave may not be used for the sole or primary purpose of traveling to or from the workplace to participate in the activity.
- I.** Employees may not use physical fitness leave on days they take a morning and/or afternoon break.
- J.** Physical fitness leave is coded as Fitness/Wellness leave (FITWL).
- K.** Employees shall not use physical fitness periods for other personal matters.
- L.** The employee is responsible for notifying his or her supervisor should he or she cease to engage regularly in the physical fitness activities at the times, days, and locations specified in the physical fitness contract.
- M.** An Administrative Authority may define the physical fitness sessions for their judicial entity. For example, a policy specifying three (3) thirty (30) minute sessions per week.
- N.** Past and current physical fitness contracts shall reside in the employee's personnel file.

  
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Arthur W. Pepin, Director  
Administrative Office of the Courts

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Date