Compliance Matters Blog

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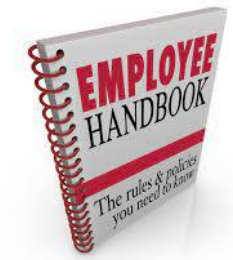
What Is the Most Effective Way to Ensure You Update Your Employee Handbook?



The Employee Handbook: One of the four documents reviewed by Lawyers in Employer Litigation! Changes in Regulations Go Hand in Hand with Changes to Employee Handbooks and Stand-Alone Policies!

- Many Employee Handbook regulations are based on learning the federal, state, and local regulations.
- More state regulations supersede federal regulations, and as a result, many employers get confused about which regulations supersede the changes.
- Especially remote employees. It has been clear that many state regulations favor employees, while others are more employer-friendly.
- It is critical to know which regulations impact your company, whether it is state-specific, multi-state, or remote, to ensure you are compliant with all workplace regulations.
- We also need to ensure that we add all the necessary regulations and that resources are provided.

2026 Employee Handbook & Policies

- Federal, State, and Local regulations are in place, and regulatory agencies are revving up audit focus for 2026 and beyond. Many state regulations and multi-state regulations are impacting which laws supersede federal regulations.
- Workers' new expectations may clash with employers' old policies.
- Policies that ban flexibilities, ban certain policies as per the National Labor Relations Board, and concerted activity may feel frustratingly out of date.
- And yet, many organizations punt on handbook refreshes. I think a lot of companies don't update their employee handbooks as often as they should.

What Are the Trending Topics for Employee Handbooks in 2026

Artificial Intelligence Has Several Major Impacts on the Workplace

AI-Powered Predictive Wellness

- In 2026, expect more companies to move toward the use of AI in terms of how they quietly support employee well-being behind the scenes.
- Rather than waiting for someone to show signs of burnout, AI tools are now beginning to be used to identify early indicators and signs that an employee might need support.

- For example, if an employee starts taking more time off than usual or their workload patterns change noticeably, AI software can detect and flag it.
- It's not about micromanaging, but it is about helping managers spot when someone might genuinely benefit from extra guidance or support.
- As these tools develop, many companies are also prioritizing employee privacy, ensuring all data use is transparent, secure, and with employee consent.
- Implementation Tip
- Use AI dashboards to flag burnout risk & trigger manager check-ins.

Wearable Tech for Wellness Tracking

- As wellness becomes more data-driven in companies in 2026, expect to see many companies begin to offer wearable technology to help staff monitor their health in real time.

- Devices such as smartwatches, fitness bands, and posture trackers are being actively encouraged by many companies to help staff be healthier and happier in the workplace.
- These tools will be optional, but many companies are providing financial incentives to use this type of wearable product, in addition to integrating some of the products with the chance to sync their wearables with the company wellness platform.
- When used thoughtfully, wearables can help you build a more health-conscious workplace culture while giving individuals greater control over their own well-being.
- Privacy Concerns for Employer-mandated wearable technology that can track activities outside the workplace, and can impact privacy.

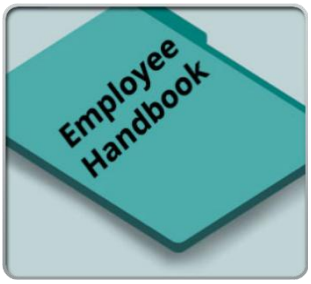
Financial & Mental Health Wellness Programs

- Financial stress is a genuine concern for many employees.
- A fairly new trend is to offer employees free workshops in financial management on topics such as:
- retirement planning
- debt management

- budgeting (including Household budget management)
- Linking financial wellness to improved employee performance is one workplace wellness trend to look out for
- Mental Health Support Expansion
- Supporting workplace mental health is evolving, and this trend is very likely to continue.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are something that more companies are beginning to offer, and in 2026, expect to see more EAPs.
- EAPs normally include access to therapy sessions, mental health days, and training for managers to understand and recognize mental health issues among their teams.

Employee Handbook Policies Can't Include Everything

- No employee handbook can exhaustively list every item that could be of concern.
- The Employee Handbook introduction should indicate that the Employee Handbook is a guideline and not a complete list or collection.
- You can add here that the policies included in the handbook are subject to change. Also, include that there might be additional behaviors that are considered unacceptable.
- Don't forget to review your state-specific and multi-state policies that can supersede federal regulations
- Don't forget to ensure there are several points of contact for questions from employees. HR and Supervisors are a good start, but you may need to add other contacts like the COO or another leadership member in case the others are not available.



For more information about the impact of Workplace Compliance Regulations, please subscribe to my website at www.hrcompliance.biz and receive compliance updates.

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