[INSERT GOVERNMENT NAME]’s Policy on

# **Proper Recording of Staff Time**

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| I commit to join with my co-workers at [insert government name] in following our policy on proper recording of staff time. |
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## Why do we have this policy?

## Staff salaries and benefits make up the largest part of [insert government name]’s budget and is over [insert percentage]% of our total costs. We must properly account for this large and expensive resource. This is no different from the equipment, vehicles, and facilities that we spend money on. This helps us build trust with the community we serve.

## What is our policy?

Staff must make their best effort to record their work time accurately. Recording time in a way that makes it appear you are working when you are not is considered theft.

## What else do I need to know?

[insert government name] recognizes that breaks and minor diversions from work are important for employee health and a productive work environment. This policy is not meant to prohibit these activities. If you have questions about what is allowed, you can check with your department’s management or our human resources department.

There are other activities that are considered theft and not allowed by this policy. Examples include:

* Recording time as worked when you did not work.
* Manipulating time records to increase overtime hours.
* Improperly recording paid time off, like recording vacation time as sick time.
* Using sick time to take paid time off when you are not sick. [insert government name] urges employees to take care of their personal health, but sick days should not be used to take unscheduled days off for recreation. [NOTE: IF YOUR GOVERNMENT’S PAID TIME OFF POLICIES MAKE THIS PROVISION INAPPLICABLE, THEN REMOVE IT.]

When we are at work, we must be professional and represent [insert government name] well. This means we need to use break time appropriately. We must be aware of how often and how long we take breaks and what we do during our breaks. For example, if someone were to take a nap in his or her workplace, it would not project a good image. You can check with your department’s management about what is acceptable. Also, you can use the chart and the end of this policy to help you think through questions you may have.

[insert government name] maintains financial records to help us figure the cost of providing services to the public. This helps us make sure we are giving our citizens a good value for their taxes. Therefore, we must all make the effort to record our time correctly, including using the right budget accounts for the activities we are working on. [insert government name] understands that we might not always be totally precise in recording our time, but we should always do our best to make reasonable and fair estimates and to charge the right accounts. Inaccurate charging on a consistent basis or giving unreasonable estimates is considered a violation of this policy.

## What reasons and rationalizations do I need to watch out for?

You might hear some reasons why it would be OK to ignore this policy. It is not OK. Here are some reasons you might hear and examples of a right response.

* **Reason:** Everyone does it, so it is OK.
* **A right response:** I don’t think that is true. Employee salaries are our biggest single expense. If everyone were doing it, it would be obvious to everyone, including the public and the media.
* **Reason:** It is only a small amount of time to falsify—for example, misrepresenting one day off for personal “recreation” as sick time. Therefore, it is not significant.
* **A right response:** Things like this often start small but then grow into big problems later. Let’s not go down that path. Most people record their time truthfully and would look down on us if we didn’t. We don’t want the reputation of people who fudge their time records.
* **Reason:** It is not a good thing to falsify time records, but it is not as bad as stealing equipment or supplies. Therefore, falsifying time is not something to be too concerned about.
* **A right response:** Well, if you are saying that falsifying time records is “the lesser of two evils,” then it is still evil. Let’s not be evil!
* **Reason:** I deserve this. I don’t get paid enough and/or I work harder than everyone else, so falsifying time to get extra compensation is OK.
* **A right response:** If you feel you are underpaid for your work, you have other options besides falsifying your time records. That could get you fired…or worse. Perhaps you should talk to your department management or our human resource department to learn what options you might have to improve your pay.
* **Reason:** I know it is wrong, but some people in my department falsify time records, and I don’t want to make waves by being different.
* **A right response:** Well, the problem is that people who commit time fraud rarely do so in total secrecy. People who don’t falsify their records often have suspicions about people who do. Therefore, if you falsify your records, you could get a reputation of being untrustworthy and limit your chances to advance your career. You do not want the reputation as someone who participates in dishonest time recording.

Think about your responses so that you are ready if someone gives you a reason to ignore the policy.

## What if I’m in a situation that this policy doesn’t cover?

Think about the situation. Compare the action you are unsure about to the steps below.

