

Executive Order 2021-03-CTH

1. **AUTHORITY:** The Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation.
2. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Executive Order is to offer additional mental wellness support for Cherokee Nation employees in the form of administrative leave. This order will allow all employees, including those participating in Cherokee Nation contracts, to receive a total of two (2) hours of “mental wellness leave” per month.

Cherokee Nation employees and citizens have faced unique barriers and hardships throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees in all Cherokee Nation departments have taken on additional tasks that have focused on the mitigation of the COVID-19 virus by providing additional services, health care and other life sustaining resources to our elders and families that go far and above their typical work load. Often with limited staffing to ensure office safety, employees have delivered traditional services while also serving more than ten times the number of citizens with COVID-19 individual assistance over the last year. Moreover, Cherokee Nation employees have aided citizens who experienced loss of life, income, residence and in some cases even the ability to thrive. At the same time, many employees were experiencing similar personal circumstances.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on mental health and wellness across the world including Cherokee Nation employees, affecting their ability to provide a positive and safe work environment for themselves and their coworkers. Employees experienced these COVID-19 pandemic related stressors and challenges on top of the existing stressors and challenges associated with public service work. It is the belief of this administration that the mental wellness of our employees, and an inclusive work environment that encourages employees to identify areas for personal growth and end the stigma surrounding mental wellness, is of the utmost importance.

3. **USE OF LEAVE:**
 - a. The leave should be coded as administrative leave. The two (2) hours of leave do not accrue, cannot be shared or transferred, and have no monetary value.
 - b. The leave can be used at the employee’s discretion and is intended for personal growth, including but not limited to; additional family time, health and wellness activities, therapy or counseling appointments or other activities focused on improving the employee’s morale and mental wellness.
 - c. The mental wellness leave will expire with the final pay period of each month.
 - d. The leave can be used in one-hour increments only for payroll and tracking purposes.

4. **EXECUTION OF ORDER:** This order should be considered a permanent and substantial attempt to improve the mental wellness of Cherokee Nation employees and impact employees and citizens in a positive way.

5. **POLICY:** V. E Leaves of Absence

6. **ACTIONS REQUIRED BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS:**

All Executive Directors, managers and/or their designee should take action on the following no later than effective date of this action.

- a. Executive Directors should allow the leave based on availability of staff, employee work load and other department factors. Employees should seek approval from managers and directors prior to use of the leave.
- b. Executive Directors should take care to assess each situation on a case-by-case basis and make the mental wellness and morale of their employees a priority.

7. **EXPRESS LIMITATIONS OF ORDER:** Nothing herein shall:

- a. Cause undo strain on department operations OR limit services available to Cherokee Nation citizens at any time.
*see employee leave policies related to leaves of absence and administrative leave.

8. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This order shall be effective immediately on this 25th day of May, 2021.



Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation