Guidelines for Professional Dress

Importance of a Professional Appearance

As representatives of UT Extension, employees are expected to present a professional image at all times. A professional appearance gives our clientele confidence in our ability to serve them. The following is a general overview of appropriate business casual attire. The guidelines cannot cover all contingencies, so an employee must exercise a certain amount of judgement in their choice of clothing to wear to work. If uncertain about acceptable professional business casual attire for work, please ask your county director, regional director, or department head. If in doubt, always dress a step better than you think is necessary. For additional information, watch this video, which is part of the BEST program: https://tiny.utk.edu/best-begin.

General Guidelines for Business Casual Attire

For general attire in the office, business casual attire is appropriate. Articles of clothing should fit properly and be clean and pressed. The following guidelines apply to all employees while in the office.

Acceptable Attire

- Polo shirts, golf-type shirts, and buttoned shirts are acceptable and should generally be tucked in. These types of shirts with UT and UT Extension logos are appropriate and encouraged.
- Chinos, khaki-type pants, slacks, or similar dress pants should be worn in the office.
- Collarless, dress-style blouses with slacks, skirts, or cropped pants are appropriate.
- Collared dress shirts and slacks with or without ties and jackets are appropriate.
- If leggings are worn, a tunic, sweater, dress, or cover up of some sort not shorter than 4 inches above the knee must be worn.
- Dress shoes, heels, dress sandals, walking shoes, loafers, boots, and leather deck-type shoes are acceptable footwear.

Unacceptable Attire

- Caps and hats worn indoors
- Sports jerseys
- Clothing with large designer labels
- Fitness clothes, gym clothes, track suits, yoga pants, athletic shirts, athletic shorts, exercise leggings, and T-shirts.
- Jeans that are ripped, frayed, torn, faded, stained, or distressed.
- Undergarments that are visible to the public
- Revealing or immodest attire
- Rubber flip flops
Dressing Appropriately for Client Visits and Meetings

Dressing appropriately for client visits and meetings will depend on the nature of the work and environment. The following guidelines will help the employee make clothing decisions depending on the nature of the visit or meeting.

- Dress appropriately for specific tasks. For example, appropriate attire for working in the field would include jeans, as long as they are neat, or coveralls and rubber boots over office attire. Athletic apparel would be appropriate for teaching an exercise class. Upon return to the office, employees should change back into business casual attire.
- Summer camps have their own dress code, but modesty is required. Please see your camp’s dress code.
- Business casual attire should be worn in the office and for:
  - Meetings at schools
  - Client workshops
  - In-service trainings and regional meetings
  - Any other meetings with outside agencies

Personal Appearance

For all employees, professional appearance also means that you are expected to maintain good hygiene and grooming while working.

- Male facial hair is permitted as long as it is neat and well-trimmed.
- Jewelry through piercings of any body parts other than the ear lobe that are visible to the public may not be worn at work.
- It is recommended that tattoos be covered while at work.
- Employees are expected to be conservative in the wearing of makeup, scented products, and hairstyles.