

**SUSPENSION, DISMISSAL
AND NONREEMPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS**

1. Definitions and Scope

- A. "Teacher" means a duly certified or licensed person who is employed to serve as a counselor, librarian, school nurse, or any instructional capacity. An administrator shall be considered a "teacher" only with regard to service in an instructional, nonadministrative capacity.
- B. "Dismissal" means the discontinuance of the teaching service of a teacher during the term of a written contract.
- C. "Nonreemployment" means the nonrenewal of a teacher's contract upon expiration of the contract.
- D. "Suspension" means the temporary discontinuance of a teacher's services during the term of a contract pending dismissal or nonreemployment.
- E. "Career teacher" means a teacher who:
- i. was employed by the technology center prior to full implementation of the district's Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Evaluation System ("TLE") and has completed three (3) or more consecutive complete school years in such capacity in the technology center under a written teaching contract; or
 - ii. was first employed by the technology center on or after full implementation of TLE under a written continuing or temporary teaching contract and:
 - completed three (3) consecutive, complete school years in the district under a written continuing or temporary teaching contract with qualitative and quantitative ratings of "superior" for at least two (2) of those years with no rating below "effective" - as measured pursuant to the district's TLE; or
 - completed four (4) consecutive, complete school years in the district under a written continuing or temporary teaching contract with averaged qualitative and quantitative ratings of "effective" or higher for the four (4) year period with qualitative and quantitative ratings of at least "effective" for the last two (2) of the four (4) years – as measured pursuant to the district's TLE; or

- completed four (4) consecutive, complete school years in the district under a written continuing or temporary teaching contract and was granted career status by the board of education after the applicable administrator and superintendent petitioned the board to grant the teacher career status. (The administrator must specify in the petition the underlying facts supporting the granting of career status.)

F. "Probationary teacher" means a teacher who:

- i. was employed by the district prior to full implementation of TLE and has completed fewer than three (3) consecutive, complete school years in such capacity in the technology center under a written teaching contract; or
- ii. was employed by the district on or after the full implementation of TLE under a written teaching contract and has not met the requirements to be a career teacher as described above.

G. "Abandonment of contract" means the failure of a teacher to report at the beginning of the contract term or otherwise perform the duties of a contract of employment when the teacher has accepted other employment or is performing work for another employer that prevents the teacher from fulfilling the obligations of the contract of employment.

H. This policy does not apply to:

- i. substitute teachers,
- ii. adult education teachers or instructors,
- iii. nonrenewal of teachers employed on temporary contracts for a complete year;
- iv. nonrenewal and dismissal of teachers employed on temporary contracts for less than a complete school year.
- v. administrators, except with regard to service in an instructional, non-administrative position.

I. This policy does apply to teachers employed in positions *fully funded* by federal or private categorical grants in regard to dismissals or suspensions during the term of employment under the grant, but not in regard to "nonreemployment" at the expiration of the grant.

2. Grounds for Dismissal or Nonreemployment

A. A career teacher may be dismissed or not reemployed for:

- i. willful neglect of duty,
- ii. repeated negligence in performance of duty,
- iii. incompetency,
- iv. unsatisfactory teaching performance,
- v. instructional ineffectiveness, including but not limited to:
 - a qualitative or quantitative rating of “ineffective” for two (2) consecutive school years after full implementation of TLE
 - a qualitative or quantitative rating of “needs improvement” or lower for three (3) consecutive school years after full implementation of TLE
 - an averaged qualitative or quantitative rating of less than “effective” for a five (5) year period after full implementation of TLE
- vi. mental or physical abuse to a child,
- vii. commission of an act of moral turpitude,
- viii. abandonment of contract,
- ix. criminal sexual activity or sexual misconduct (as those terms are defined by law) which has impeded the effectiveness of the teacher's performance of school duties,
- x. failure to meet local school board staff development requirements (non-reemployment only), and
- xi. any other grounds hereafter allowed by law.

B. A career teacher shall be dismissed or not reemployed for

- i. conviction of a felony,
- ii. conviction of any sex offense subject to Oklahoma’s Sex Offenders Registration Act or another state’s or the Federal Sex Offender Registration Provisions,
- iii. instructional ineffectiveness, including:
 - a qualitative and quantitative rating of “ineffective” for two (2) consecutive school years after full implementation of TLE

- a qualitative and quantitative rating of “needs improvement” or lower for three (3) consecutive school years after full implementation of TLE
 - an averaged qualitative and quantitative rating of less than “effective” for a five (5) year period after full implementation of TLE

- C. A probationary teacher may be dismissed or not reemployed for cause, including but not limited to receiving a qualitative or quantitative rating of “ineffective” for two (2) consecutive school years after full implementation of TLE.

- D. A probationary teacher shall be dismissed or not reemployed for
 - i. conviction of a felony,
 - ii. conviction of any sex offense subject to Oklahoma’s Sex Offenders Registration Act or another state’s or the Federal Sex Offender Registration Provisions,
 - iii. receiving a qualitative and quantitative rating of “ineffective”, as measured pursuant to the district’s TLE, for two (2) consecutive school years, after full implementation of TLE,
 - iv. failure to attain career teacher status within a four-year period, after full implementation of TLE.

- E. A cause listed 2A(i) - (v) for a career teacher, or any cause related to inadequate teaching performance for a probationary teacher, shall not be a basis for a recommendation to dismiss or not reemploy a teacher unless corrective action procedures involving admonishment / plan for improvement have been followed. Dismissal or nonreemployment for any cause not listed in 2A(i) - (v) for a career teacher, or not related to inadequate teaching performance for a probationary teacher, shall not require corrective action procedures (i.e. admonishment) to be followed.

- F. Corrective Action – Admonishment / Plan for Improvement
 - i. When the administrator who has evaluated a teacher pursuant to technology center policy identifies poor performance, conduct or a TLE evaluation rating that the administrator believes may lead to a recommendation for the teacher's dismissal or nonreemployment, the administrator shall:
 - admonish the teacher, in writing, and make a reasonable effort to assist the teacher in correcting the poor performance or conduct; and

- establish a reasonable time for improvement, not to exceed two (2) months, taking into consideration the rating on the evaluation or the nature and gravity of the teacher's performance or conduct.
- ii. Whenever a member of the board of education, superintendent, or other administrator identifies poor performance or conduct that may lead to a recommendation for dismissal or nonreemployment of a teacher, the administrator who has responsibility for evaluation of the teacher shall be informed and shall admonish the teacher as described above. If the administrator fails or refuses to admonish the teacher within ten (10) days after being informed of the problem, the board, superintendent or other administrator who identified the problem shall admonish the teacher.
- iii. If the teacher does not correct the poor performance or conduct cited in the admonition within the time specified, the administrator (or other admonishing official) shall make a recommendation to the superintendent for the dismissal or nonreemployment of the teacher. The superintendent shall furnish a copy of the recommendation to the board of education.

3. Procedures for Dismissal or Nonreemployment

A. Commencement of Action

- i. Whenever the superintendent determines that cause exists for the dismissal or nonreemployment of a teacher employed within the technology center, the superintendent shall submit a recommendation in writing to the board of education. The recommendation shall state the one or more specific grounds (statutory grounds, in the case of a career teacher) and specify the underlying facts on which the recommended dismissal or nonreemployment is based.
- ii. In the absence of a recommendation from the superintendent pursuant to this section, or when the board of education chooses not to accept the superintendent's recommendation as to reemployment of a teacher, the board may initiate dismissal or nonreemployment action without a recommendation provided that it adheres to the other provisions of this policy and that the corrective action procedures, if applicable, have been followed.

B. Suspension

Whenever the superintendent has reason to believe that cause exists for the dismissal of a teacher and is of the opinion that the immediate suspension of the teacher would be in the best interests of the students in the district, the superintendent, or the board of education on the recommendation of the superintendent, may suspend the teacher without notice or hearing. The suspension shall not deprive the teacher of any teaching compensation or other benefits to which he/she would otherwise be entitled under the teaching contract or pursuant to law. Within ten (10) days after the suspension becomes effective,

the board of education shall initiate a hearing for dismissal pursuant to this policy. However, in a case involving a criminal charge or indictment, such suspension may extend to such time as the teacher's case is finally adjudicated, except such extension shall not include any appeal process.

C. Notice and Hearing

- i. Prior to the time that the board of education takes any action to dismiss or nonreemploy a teacher, whether the board is acting on its own volition or on a recommendation of the superintendent, the clerk of the board or other individual designated by the board shall deliver to the teacher a copy of the recommendation (or a comparable statement of grounds and underlying facts, if the board is acting on its own volition), and a notice that the teacher has a right to a hearing before the board stating the date, time and place set by the board for the teacher hearing. Delivery of the recommendation shall be by any of the following: (1) certified mail, restricted delivery, return receipt requested; (2) personal delivery to the teacher with a signed acknowledgment of receipt; or (3) process server. In the same manner the board or individual designated by the board shall notify the teacher of the right to a hearing before the board and the date, time and place for the hearing. The hearing shall be held no fewer than 20 days and no more than 60 days after the receipt of the notice by the teacher, or after the date on the personal receipt by hand-delivery to the teacher, or after the date of delivery by process server. Notice of a recommendation of nonreemployment or possible nonreemployment action by the board acting on its own volition shall be given to the teacher prior to the first Monday in June.
- ii. The teacher hearing before the board of education shall be conducted pursuant to procedures established by the State Department of Education. In the absence of or to the extent not inconsistent with those procedures, the hearing shall be conducted as prescribed in the paragraphs below.
- iii. The hearing shall commence with a statement to the teacher of the teacher's rights at the hearing. Following this statement, the school administration shall present facts showing the cause for the teacher's dismissal or nonreemployment. The teacher shall then have the right to present the teacher's side of the matter. After both the school administration and the teacher have fully presented their respective positions, the board of education shall deliberate on the evidence regarding the teacher's dismissal or nonreemployment in executive session.
- iv. At the hearing, the teacher shall be entitled to be represented by counsel, to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school administration, to present witnesses on the teacher's behalf and to present any relevant evidence or statement which the teacher desires to offer. The burden of proof for any dismissal or nonreemployment shall be on the

superintendent (or designee), and the standard of proof shall be a preponderance of the evidence.

- v. After due consideration of the evidence and testimony presented at the teacher's hearing, the board shall vote, in open session, on the following: (1) findings of fact based on the evidence submitted and (2) whether to dismiss or nonreemploy the teacher. The decision shall be made by a majority of the board of education members present at the meeting and shall be final and nonappealable

The motion to dismiss or nonreemploy the teacher should state the specific cause for dismissal or nonreemployment, although such cause need not be a statutory cause for a probationary teacher.

- vi. The teacher shall be sent notice of the board's decision by certified mail, restricted delivery, return receipt requested, or substitute process. The notice shall state the basis for the board's decision.
- vii. The teacher shall receive any compensation or benefits to which the teacher is entitled until such time as the board's decision is final. If the teacher's hearing is for nonreemployment, and not for dismissal, the teacher's compensation and benefits may continue only until the end of the teacher's current contract.

D. Criminal Matters

Whenever the superintendent (or board) makes a recommendation for a teacher's termination based on conduct which could form the basis of criminal charges sufficient to warrant revocation of the teacher's certificate, the superintendent shall forward a copy of the recommendation to the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the teacher at the conclusion of any due process provided to the teacher or upon acceptance of the teacher's resignation.

Reference: 70 O.S. §6-101, OAC 210-1-5-8

**REDUCTION IN FORCE
CERTIFIED TEACHER PERSONNEL**

1. General Matters

- A. Reasons for a Reduction in Force. A teacher may be dismissed or nonreemployed when the board decides that due to (i) a financial exigency or (ii) a program change for institutional reasons or (iii) a decline in enrollment or (iv) other business necessity as determined by the board, a reduction in teaching staff is necessary.
- B. Definitions. For the purpose of this policy, the following terms have the stated meanings:
1. "Financial exigency" means a reduction in the technology center's financial resources resulting from declining enrollment or any other action or event that in the sole judgment of the board of education will result in a reduction in the technology center's current or future operating budget.
 2. "Program change" means any elimination, curtailment or reorganization of a curriculum offering, program or school operation or a reorganization or closing of a school or consolidation of two or more individual schools or districts that is unrelated to financial exigency.
 3. "Declining enrollment" means a decrease in the technology center's total enrollment or enrollment in a particular program or curriculum offering which in the sole judgment of the board of education may adversely affect the technology center's current or future allocation of funds and/or the necessity of maintaining certain current or future class sections or curriculum offerings.
- C. Criteria for Eliminating Positions. The primary criterion in effectuating any reduction in force shall be the maintenance of a sound and balanced educational program that is consistent with the functions and responsibilities of the technology center. In evaluating its program, the superintendent and the board will consider the elimination of teaching positions, not the teachers occupying those positions. In deciding which positions to eliminate, the superintendent and the board will consider the curriculum, the needs of students and those extra duty assignments that require special skill or expertise.

- D. Priority. In determining which teacher(s) will be dismissed or nonreemployed when one or more of a number of identical positions is eliminated, the following criteria, **in this order**, shall govern:
1. The technology center will dismiss or nonreemploy the teacher(s) who has the lowest composite rating under the technology center's Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Evaluation System (TLE) in the position being eliminated. Ratings will be calculated by averaging the past three (3) years' ratings (or fewer if 3 years are not available) and will be measured to the nearest hundredth of a decimal point.
 2. If the teachers are equal under the above criteria, then the teacher(s) who has the most seniority in the technology center will be retained.
 3. If the teachers are equal under the above criteria, then the technology center will retain the teacher(s) who currently holds a contracted extra duty assignment, IF, after the reduction in force, that teacher will continue to be assigned such extra duty assignment.
 4. If no contracted extra duty assignment exists, the technology center will retain the teacher who meets any federal requirements, such as "highly qualified" under No Child Left Behind, for the courses assigned to that teacher.
 5. If the teachers are equal under the above criteria, the technology center will retain the teacher with the most advanced academic degree status.
 6. If degree status is equal, the technology center will retain the teacher having the most versatile certificate in order to enable the technology center to have flexibility in planning future curriculum.
 7. If versatility of certificates is equal, the technology center will retain the teacher chosen by lot through a process determined by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.
- E. Bumping. If a teacher's position is eliminated and the teacher scheduled to be dismissed or nonreemployed (after going through the criteria in section "D" above) has a composite TLE score of effective, as defined by the district's TLE model, then in the administration's sole discretion, that teacher may be placed in another position for which the teacher is certified to teach, if the other position is currently held by a teacher who has a composite TLE score that is below effective. Under those circumstances, the teacher with the TLE composite below effective will be dismissed or nonreemployed. If two (2) or more teachers in a specific position have the same composite scores, then the process of section (D) will be used to determine who is dismissed or nonreemployed.
- F. Adult Education Teachers. The dismissal and nonreemployment provisions of the Teacher Due Process Act of 1990 do not apply to adult education teachers. Accordingly, adult education teachers are not covered by the protections of this

policy and, unless otherwise required by law, are subject to a reduction in force without notice and without compliance with this policy.

2. Procedures

- A. Action by Superintendent. The superintendent, upon receipt of the board's preliminary determination of the necessity for a reduction in force, or upon the superintendent's own volition, shall submit to the board the superintendent's written recommendations for terminating particular teaching positions. In making recommendations, the superintendent (i) shall not be limited to considering only positions in the areas or programs designated by the board and (ii) shall consult with each principal or other administrator in whose school or unit a position elimination/termination is proposed and (iii) shall take into consideration the criteria set out herein.
- B. Action by Board. In the absence of a recommendation from the superintendent pursuant to this section, or when the board of education chooses not to accept the superintendent's recommendation, the board may initiate action without such recommendation provided that it adheres to the other provisions of this policy.
- C. Notice and Hearing Procedures. Prior to taking any action to nonreemploy or dismiss a teacher due to a reduction in force, whether acting on a recommendation of the superintendent or on its own volition, the board shall provide notice and an opportunity for hearing to the affected teacher; provided, however, because the law does not provide nonrenewal hearings for teachers on temporary contracts, no hearing opportunity shall be afforded any teacher on a temporary contract with notice of the expiration of the temporary teacher's contract at the end of the school year being provided to the temporary teacher. The notice and board hearing procedures shall be the same as those provided by Oklahoma law and board policy regarding dismissal and nonreemployment of teachers for cause. Notice of a recommendation of nonreemployment shall be given to the teacher prior to the 1st Monday in June.
- D. Hearing. At the hearing, evidence may be presented by the administration and the teacher, as to (i) whether a reduction in force is reasonably necessary and is being made in good faith and for the best interests of the technology center and (ii) whether the recommendation to not renew (or dismiss) the specific teacher is being made in good faith and pursuant to the process set out herein.
- E. Effect of Board Decision. The decision of the board based on the evidence presented at the hearing shall be final and unappealable.

3. Reemployment or Other Employment After Reduction in Force

- A. Recall. The recall provisions in this process will only apply and be available to a teacher who had a composite TLE score of at least effective at the time of his/her nonreemployment (or dismissal). For one school year after the effective date of nonreemployment (or dismissal) due to a reduction in force, the board of

education shall not fill the specific position previously held by a teacher who was nonreemployed (or dismissed) due to a reduction in force without first offering such position to the nonreemployed (or dismissed) teacher. If more than one nonreemployed (or dismissed) teacher is both certified and qualified for a position which the teachers previously held with the technology center and which becomes available, the board, after receiving the superintendent's advice, shall select the teacher it believes will best fill the position. Nothing in this policy shall give to any nonreemployed (or dismissed) teacher priority rights to fill a vacancy which becomes available and for which they are certified and qualified unless such position is identical to the position which they previously held with the technology center.

- B. Recall Procedures. The offer of reemployment shall be made personally or by certified mail, return receipt requested, and the teacher shall be notified that if he/she wishes to accept, he/she must do so in writing within five (5) calendar days of receipt of notice or within ten (10) calendar days of the postmark on the envelope in which the offer is mailed, whichever is shorter. Failure to receive timely acceptance of the offer of reemployment eliminates all reemployment rights of the teacher.
- C. Status After Recall. A career teacher who has been nonreemployed (or dismissed) and who is then reemployed within one school year shall be reinstated as a career teacher. A probationary teacher who is nonreemployed (or dismissed) but is then reemployed within one school year shall be given credit for the time already served as a probationary teacher for the purpose of determining eligibility for career teacher status.

4. Interpretation and Application

The interpretation and application of any provision of this policy shall be the exclusive province of the Board of Education.

RESIGNATION OF CERTIFIED PERSONNEL

Resignations must be dated and submitted in writing to the superintendent stating the effective date of resignation. Equivocal resignations will not be accepted. A resignation to be effective at the conclusion of a school year must be received prior to fifteen (15) days after the first Monday in June of that school year. A resignation to be effective at any other time or to be effective at the conclusion of the school year but received after fifteen (15) days after the first Monday in June does not sever the employment relationship for the subsequent school year unless and until approved by the board.

Resignations offered during the course of the school year will not be accepted unless the superintendent determines that arrangements can be made to avoid a detrimental impact on efficient operation of the school and the board of education concurs.

A resignation may not be withdrawn after it has been accepted by the superintendent and will be considered irrevocable from that date.

Upon receipt of a written resignation from a certified employee, the superintendent shall:

1. Make a record of the date upon which the written resignation was submitted either by reference to a certified mail receipt or by writing on the face of the resignation the date of receipt and his/her initials.
2. If the written resignation is to be effective at the conclusion of the current school year and it is received prior to fifteen (15) days after the first Monday in June, notify the employee that his/her resignation is accepted.
3. If the written resignation is to be effective at any time other than the conclusion of the current school year or to be effective at the end of the school year but is not received until after fifteen (15) days after the first Monday in June, notify the employee that his/her resignation will be considered by the board of education.
4. Place upon the agenda of the next board of education meeting an agenda item for consideration and action on the resignation received.

The board of education may accept or decline to accept the resignation of a certified employee. Provided, that the board of education, by adoption of this policy, authorizes the superintendent to accept the resignation of those employees submitting resignations prior to fifteen (15) days after the first Monday in June to be effective at the conclusion of the then current school year.

Payment of final compensation shall be processed and disbursed at the scheduled times.

STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE AND CONDUCT FOR TEACHERS

Teachers are charged with the education of the youth of this state. In order to perform effectively, teachers must demonstrate a belief in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizing the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles.

In recognition of the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process and by virtue of the desire for the respect and confidence of their colleagues, students, parents and the community, teachers are to be guided in their conduct by their commitment to their students and their profession.

PRINCIPLE I

Commitment to the Students

Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 210:20-29-3 – Effective June 25, 1993

The teacher must strive to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society. The teacher must work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.

In fulfillment of the obligation to the student, the teacher:

1. Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning;
2. Shall not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view;
3. Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress;
4. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety;
5. Shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement;
6. Shall not on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation, unfairly:
 - A. Exclude any student from participation in any program;
 - B. Deny benefits to any students;

- C. Grant any advantage to any student.
- 7. Shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage; and
- 8. Shall not disclose information about students obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose and is permitted by law or is required by law.

PRINCIPLE II

Commitment to the Profession

Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC) 210:20-29-4 – Effective June 25, 1993

The teaching profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professional service.

In order to assure that the quality of the services of the teaching profession meets the expectations of the state and its citizens, the teacher shall exert every effort to raise professional standards, fulfill professional responsibilities with honor and integrity, promote a climate that encourages and exercise of professional judgment, achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education, and assist in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons.

In fulfillment of the obligation to the profession, the educator:

- 1. Shall not in an application for a professional position deliberately make a false statement, or fail to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications.
- 2. Shall not misrepresent his/her professional qualifications.
- 3. Shall not assist any entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified in respect to character, education or other relevant attribute.
- 4. Shall not knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position.
- 5. Shall not assist an unqualified person in the unauthorized practice of the profession.
- 6. Shall not disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.
- 7. Shall not knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague.
- 8. Shall not accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions.

PRINCIPLE III

1. Subject to the provisions of the Teacher Due Process Act of 1990, a career teacher may be dismissed or not reemployed for:
 - A. Willful neglect of duty.
 - B. Repeated negligence in performance of duty.
 - C. Mental or physical abuse to a child.
 - D. Incompetency.
 - E. Instructional ineffectiveness.
 - F. Unsatisfactory teaching performance.
 - G. Commission of an act of moral turpitude.
 - H. Abandonment of contract.
2. Subject to the provisions of the Teacher Due Process Act, a probationary teacher may be dismissed or not reemployed for cause.
3. A teacher shall be dismissed or not reemployed unless a presidential or gubernatorial pardon has been issued, if during the term of employment the teacher is convicted in this state, the United States, or another state of:
 - A. Any sex offense subject to the Sex Offender Registration Act in this state or subject to another state's or the federal sex offender registration provisions; or
 - B. Any felony offense.
4. A teacher may be dismissed, refused employment, or not reemployed after a finding that such person engaged in criminal sexual activity or sexual misconduct that has impeded the effectiveness of the individual's performance of school duties. As used in this subsection:
 - A. "Criminal sexual activity" means the commission of an act defined in Section 886 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes, which is the act of sodomy; and

- B. “Sexual misconduct” means the soliciting or imposing of criminal sexual activity

As used in this section, “abandonment of contract” means the failure of a teacher to report at the beginning of the contract term or otherwise perform the duties of a contract of employment when the teacher has accepted other employment or is performing work for another employer that prevents the teacher from fulfilling the obligations of the contract of employment.