

Last Reviewed: 1/4/2021
Effective: 4/1/1993
Revised: 3/6/2014, 12/17/2020
Primary Approver(s): City
Manager

City of
PORTSMOUTH
New Hampshire



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TITLE: *Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy – City Policy #28*

NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

1 PURPOSE

The City of Portsmouth (“City”) will not tolerate any form of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. The purpose of this policy is to affirm the City’s commitment to these important goals, provide guidance to prevent unlawful conduct, describe the means of reporting complaints and concerns, and to identify consequences. Adherence to this policy will promote a productive, safe and professional organization in which all persons are treated with fairness and respect.

Employees with any questions about this policy should not hesitate to contact their supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all departments and divisions. It applies to all employees, full and part-time, as well as all interns (collectively “employees”). This policy covers employees’ interactions with each other as well as with the public, vendors and contractors. Employees shall not engage in discriminatory or harassing conduct and equally as important, employees shall report discriminatory or harassing conduct regardless of whether that conduct is committed by a co-worker, member of the public, vendor or contractor so that the issue may be addressed promptly.

3 DEFINITIONS

Discrimination: For the purposes of this policy, discrimination means conduct that is based upon an individual’s protected status (as defined below) and that: adversely affects a term or condition of the individual’s employment; is used as the basis for or a factor in decisions affecting the individual’s employment; or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Harassment: Harassment is a form of discrimination and includes unwelcome verbal, written, physical, or non-physical conduct that is based on a person’s protected status that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment or otherwise negatively affects an individual’s employment opportunities or benefits. Harassment is a form of discrimination, and can take many forms.

Protected Status: A personal characteristic including race, color, religion, disability, age, sex (including pregnancy), religion, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, protected veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, or any other

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characteristic protected by law. Protected status is sometimes referred to as “protected class” or “protected category.”

4 DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROHIBITED

The City expressly prohibits any form of unlawful harassment or discrimination based on an individual’s protected status. Employees shall not engage in discriminatory or harassing conduct against any person, whether a co-worker, intern, member of the public, vendor or contractor.

The conduct prohibited by this policy, whether verbal, written, physical, or visual, includes any discriminatory employment action and an unwelcome conduct that is inflicted on someone because of that individual’s protected status. Among the types of conduct prohibited by this policy are epithets, slurs, jokes, negative stereotyping, intimidating acts, and the circulation or posting of written or graphic materials that show hostility toward individuals because of their protected status whether that posting is physical or done through social media or other electronic means. The City prohibits that conduct in the workplace, even if the conduct is not sufficiently severe or pervasive to constitute unlawful harassment.

5 SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment, as a form of harassment, is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, physical and non-physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a condition of employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for any employment decisions affecting the person involved; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

This policy prohibits sexual harassment regardless of whether it rises to the level of unlawfulness. Sexual harassment can occur between members of the same sex as well as different genders. Sexual harassment includes preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment to an employee for submitting to sexual conduct.

Examples of sexual harassment forbidden by this policy also includes, but is not limited to: (1) offensive sex-oriented verbal kidding, teasing or jokes; (2) repeated unwanted sexual flirtations, advances or propositions; (3) verbal abuse of a sexual nature; (4) graphic or degrading comments about an individual’s appearance or sexual activity; (5) offensive visual conduct, including leering, making sexual gestures, the display of offensive sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons or posters; (6) unwelcome pressure for sexual activity; (7) offensively suggestive or obscene texts, emails, letters, notes or invitations; or (8) offensive physical contact such as patting, grabbing, pinching, or brushing against another’s body.

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6 EMPLOYEE AND SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees are responsible for keeping the work environment free of harassment and discrimination. This means encouraging respect and fairness and avoiding the encouragement of actions that could be perceived as discriminatory or harassing. Employees are responsible for reporting incidents of harassment and discrimination as described in Paragraph 7.

Employees in a supervisory role have heightened obligation. If a supervisor observes or receives information regarding an actual or alleged incident of harassment or discrimination, the supervisor shall take immediate action to stop it, whenever possible or appropriate, and is obligated to report the incident using any of the options identified below in Paragraph 7. The supervisor shall take further prompt effective measures to ensure that no further apparent or alleged harassment or discrimination occurs pending completion of any investigation, in consultation with the Human Resources Director and the City Manager as appropriate. For example, it may be appropriate to place an employee against whom a harassment allegation has been made on administrative leave with pay pending the conclusion of the investigation. Any supervisor who is made aware of harassment or discrimination and fails to report it may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Nothing in this Policy prohibits employees from affirmatively speaking with their co-workers about behavior, jokes, comments or other acts that they find uncomfortable or concerning if that employee is comfortable doing so in furtherance of educating their co-workers, but there is no requirement to do so.

7 REPORTING PROCEDURES AND INVESTIGATION

By Employees: Complaints of discrimination or harassment of any type shall be reported immediately to any of the following: a supervisor, the Director of Human Resources or the City Manager. This policy does not require reporting harassment or discrimination to any individual who is creating the harassment or engaging in the discriminatory conduct.

By Supervisors: Supervisors who become aware of harassing conduct and/or a complaint of harassment of any type shall report the conduct and/or complaint immediately to the Director of Human Resources or the City Manager.

Any complaint of discrimination, whether reported by an employee or received from a member of the public, vendor or contractor, will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken depending on the nature and severity of any proven incident. Investigations will be conducted as discretely as possible, consistent with the need to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation. Confidentiality cannot be promised.

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The seal of the City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is circular and features a central image of a ship on the stocks. The text around the seal reads "CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, N.H." at the top, "SETTLED 1630" on the left, "INCORPORATED 1838" on the right, and "NEW HAMPSHIRE" at the bottom.

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8 CORRECTIVE ACTION

Depending on the outcome of any investigation, the City will take appropriate corrective action to stop the discrimination or harassment and prevent its recurrence. Any employee who is found to have engaged in discrimination or harassment prohibited by the policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. The City may discipline an employee for any inappropriate conduct discovered in investigating reports made under this policy, regardless of whether the conduct amounts to a violation of law. If the person who engaged in conduct in violation of this policy is not a City employee, the City will take whatever corrective action is reasonable and appropriate under the circumstances.

9 RETALIATION PROHIBITED

Retaliatory treatment of any employee for reporting discrimination, harassment or other prohibited behavior or for cooperating in a harassment investigation is strictly prohibited. All employees who experience or witness any conduct they believe to be retaliatory shall immediately report such conduct according to one of the options defined in Paragraph 7. Retaliation is a form of unlawful discrimination and will be handled in the same manner as other forms of conduct violating this policy.