STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICE

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY STATEMENT

Sexual Harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of the employment relationship. It is the policy of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to provide its employees with a workplace that is free from sexual harassment. Regardless of whether the conduct results from maliciousness, thoughtlessness, or poor judgment, sexual harassment in the workplace is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Sexual Harassment is illegal and violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 US Code Section 2000e *et. seq.,* as amended, as well as Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 46a-60(a)(8). DESPP prohibits sexual harassment, in any form, by or against its employees, volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, vendors, visitors, parties and other offices. Any employee who violates this policy statement will be subjected to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual Harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, and other electronic, verbal, and/or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as a term or condition of an individual's employment; or

2) Submission to and/or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting an individual's employment, evaluation, wages, advancement, assigned duties, shifts or career development; or

3) Such conduct is so severe or pervasive that it has the purpose or effect of creating an objectively hostile or abusive environment.

The following types of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include:

- Repeated sexual advances, propositions and/or inappropriate and/or offensive comments;
- Engaging in sexual flirtation and/or physical touching;
- Inappropriate exposure of physical anatomy;
- Discussing sexual activities;
- Making a comment and/or spreading a rumor which embarrasses, ridicules or demeans a person because of the individual's gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, and/or transgender status;

1111 Country Club Road, 2 North, Middletown, Connecticut 06457
Phone: (860) 685-8657/Fax: (860) 706-1325

- Making graphic and/or suggestive comments about an individual's body or physical appearance;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons or drawings;
- Threatening or insinuating, either explicitly or implicitly, that an employee's refusal to submit to sexual advances shall adversely affect the employee's continued employment, performance evaluation, wages, advancement, assigned duties, and/or any other privilege or condition of employment;
- Using or displaying crude and offensive language and/or gestures, sexually explicit jokes, sexually explicit media, and/or sexually degrading words to describe an individual; and
- Retaliation against an employee for reporting sexual harassment and/or participating in an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Affirmative Action (AA) investigation regarding sexual harassment, in accordance with DESPP's Anti-Retaliation Policy Statement.

Several examples of conduct that may violate the DESPP Anti-Retaliation Policy Statement include the following:

- Termination, demotion, disadvantageous transfers or assignments, refusals to promote, threats, reprimands, negative evaluations;
- Co-worker hostility or retaliatory harassment, to include intimidation, gossip, rumors, insults, or otherwise offensive conduct that would subject a person to public ridicule or humiliation; and/or
- Any action or combination of actions that are reasonably likely to materially and adversely affect an employee's job performance or opportunity for advancement.

When interacting with others in the workplace, it is important to be sensitive to the way in which words and actions may be perceived by others. If words or actions could reasonably be perceived as offensive and unwelcome, they could constitute unlawful harassment.

ELECTRONIC SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Electronic sexual harassment is identified as repeated, unsolicited, threatening behavior of a sexual nature by a person or group using mobile and/or internet technology, including audio/video or other recording devices, with the intent to bother, terrify, intimidate, humiliate, threaten, harass or stalk an individual. The harassment can take place in any electronic environment where communication with others is possible, such as on social networking/media sites, on message boards, in chat rooms or through email. DESPP is committed to preventing electronic sexual harassment and responding to any instances by investigating and providing appropriate disciplinary action.

DESPP prohibits all inappropriate communications whether verbal or non-verbal. This includes the sharing of sexual jokes and pictures, if not intended to harass.

Employee Responsibilities:

All DESPP employees are responsible for complying with this policy statement, for maintaining a high level of professional conduct in the workplace and providing a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and fairness.

Each DESPP manager, commander, and/or supervisor has the responsibility to maintain a workplace free of any form of sexual harassment, and to monitor working conditions in order to detect any violation(s) of this policy statement.

Reporting Sexual Harassment:

DESPP employees who feel that they have been subjected to or have witnessed sexual harassment is urged to report the conduct to any of the following:

1. Their manager, commander, and/or supervisor; or

2. Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist 2, Daphne L. Lewis
   1111 Country Club Road, Middletown, Connecticut 06457-2389
   Telephone: 860-685-8657 Email: Daphne.Lewis@ct.gov

All DESPP employees are also urged to review DESPP's Administrative and Operational Manual, Section 4.1.3 for specific employee responsibilities and reporting procedures.

Complaints Against Agency Heads and Affirmative Action Officers:

Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 46a-68(b)(4)(B), the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) shall receive any complaint alleging that the executive head of a state agency or department, any member of a state board or commission or any affirmative action officer engaged in sexual harassment to determine whether it should be forwarded to the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) for investigation. If the complaint is made against DAS, CHRO conducts the investigation. The purpose of this legislation was to eliminate the conflict that may arise if an affirmative action officer has to investigate allegations against their manager, commander, and/or supervisor, as such officers report directly to the appointing authority.

Investigating Complaints:

DESPP shall promptly investigate all complaints and reports of sexual harassment and take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. DESPP employees are expected to cooperate with all investigations and any actions taken by DESPP as a result of such investigations.

Any manager, commander, and/or supervisor who receives a complaint about prohibited sexual harassment or who believes that someone is engaging in such conduct is mandated to report the same to the DESPP Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office; failure to do so may subject the manager, commander, and/or supervisor to disciplinary action.

If you have any questions regarding the DESPP Sexual Harassment Policy Statement, please contact:

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1111 Country Club Road, Middletown, Connecticut 06457-2389
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2.8.2022
Date

James C. Rovella
Commissioner