



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE
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Child Advocate

ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Purpose

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) is committed to providing a work environment in which all people are treated with respect and dignity. OCA strictly prohibits sexual harassment and harassment based on all protected classes including race, religious creed, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, disability and sexual orientation. All employees are expected to help with this effort.

While some of this policy focuses specifically on sexual harassment, it in fact establishes a zero tolerance policy for harassment based on any and all of the protected classes listed above. The principals and compliant procedures outlined in this policy apply to both sexual harassment and other forms of illegal harassment against agency employees.

While this policy sets forth OCA's goal of promoting a workplace that is free of harassment, it is not designed or intended to limit OCA's authority to discipline or take remedial action for workplace conduct that OCA deems unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the legal definition of sexual or other harassment.

Prohibited Conduct

OCA will not tolerate harassment by anyone, including any supervisor, co-worker, vendor, client or customer, whether in the workplace, as assignments outside the workplace, at OCA-sponsored social functions, or elsewhere.

What is "Sexual Harassment"?

Sexual Harassment is a form of sex discrimination, which is prohibited under both Connecticut and federal law. The legal definition of "sexual harassment" is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person's employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting the person; or

- Such conduct is so severe or pervasive that it unreasonably interferes with a person's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

The offender or the victim of harassment may be either a man or woman. Also, harassment can involve people of the same or the opposite sex.

Examples of Harassment

Conduct need not be severe or pervasive, or unreasonably interfere with a person's work performance to be prohibited harassment under this policy. Although not a complete list, the following are examples of conduct that may be harassment:

- Unwanted sexual advances and explicit sexual proposals;
- Demands for sexual favors in exchange for favorable treatment or continued employment;
- Suggestive comments, sexually-oriented kidding, teasing or practical jokes;
- Jokes about ethnicity, religious beliefs or practices, accents, or gender-specific traits;
- Foul or obscene body language or gestures;
- Display of printed or visual material that is foul, obscene or offensive;
- Sending or viewing jokes, pictures, or other information by e-mail or the internet that is sexually explicit, or ridicules a person's ethnicity, religion, sexual-orientation or other unchangeable characteristics;
- Unwanted physical contact, such as touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another's body.

Reporting Harassment

1. **Victims of Harassment.** If you believe that you are being harassed, you should clearly and promptly tell the offender that you want him or her to stop the behavior. If for any reason you do not wish to confront the offender directly or if confrontation does not successfully end the harassment, you should immediately report the harassment to any one of the following people:
 - Your supervisor or manager;
 - The Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist (Ngina Gibson), 860-713-8285; or
 - The Human Resources Specialist (Debby Hearl), 860-713-5314.
2. **Employees Who Witness Harassment.** Any employee who witnesses harassment or becomes aware that another employee has been subjected to prohibited harassment is also urged to immediately report the conduct to one of the three people listed above.
3. **Supervisors and Managers.** Any supervisor or manager who receives a complaint about harassment or who believes that someone is engaging in conduct that may be prohibited harassment must immediately report it to Ngina Gibson or Debby Hearl. Ignoring such conduct is not acceptable and may subject the supervisor or manager to disciplinary action.

No Retaliation

OCA strictly forbids retaliation against employees who report harassment or who participate in internal or external investigations of harassment. OCA will not engage in any such retaliation nor will it permit employees to do so. All employees are strongly urged to report all instances of retaliation to one of the individuals listed above.

Investigating Complaints

OCA's policy is to take all complaints and reports of harassment seriously. All complaints and reports will be promptly investigated. Employees are required to participate in investigations when asked.

Corrective Action

If an investigation confirms that harassment or other unacceptable conduct has occurred, OCA will promptly take such corrective action as is appropriate under the circumstances. Discipline up to and including discharge from state service may be imposed.

False or Malicious Reports

Disciplinary action may be imposed if the OCA determines that a false or malicious complaint was made under this policy.

Jeanne Milstein, Child Advocate
The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)