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DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES & PUBLIC PROTECTION  
**COMMISSIONER RONNELL A. HIGGINS**

1111 COUNTRY CLUB ROAD, MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457 • (860) 685-8000

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**ANTI-HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

**Purpose**

The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) is committed to providing a work environment in which all people are treated with respect and dignity. All employees are expected to participate in this effort.

**Prohibited Conduct**

Federal and state law, including Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a)(1), and the Connecticut Fair Employment Practices Act, C.G.S. §46a-60 *et seq.*, prohibit various forms of discrimination and illegal harassment in employment.

DESPP strictly prohibits discrimination, including sexual harassment and harassment based on all of the following legally protected classes: race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); status as a victim of domestic violence; military or veteran status; or criminal record.

“Harassment” means any verbal, physical, graphic, or written conduct when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for an employment decision affecting that individual; or
- Such conduct interferes with another’s work performance or creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile work environment.

DESPP shall not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected class by anyone, including, but not limited to, any supervisor, co-worker, vendor, client or customer, whether in the workplace, at assignments outside of the workplace, at DESPP-sponsored social events, or elsewhere.

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**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

## **Reporting Discrimination and Harassment**

- 1. Claimants** – If you believe that you are being harassed or otherwise discriminated against because of your protected class, you should immediately report the harassment/discrimination to any one of the following:
  - Your supervisor or manager;
  - DESPP’s Human Resources Specialist – Equal Employment Opportunity, Ashley Burke (860-805-2358) or Human Resources Specialist – Equal Employment Opportunity, Alexis Cortes (860-816-8847); or
  - DESPP’s Acting Human Resources Business Partner 1, Ryan Howe (860-597-1104).
- 2. Witnesses** – Any employee who witnesses harassment or other forms of discrimination prohibited under this policy or becomes aware that another employee has been subjected to such harassment or discrimination is also urged to immediately report the conduct via one of the three avenues listed above.
- 3. Supervisors and Managers** – Any supervisor or manager who receives a complaint about prohibited harassment or other forms of discrimination or who believes that someone is engaging in such conduct, are mandated to report it to Ashley Burke, Alexis Cortes, or Ryan Howe. Ignoring such conduct is not optional and may subject the supervisor or manager to disciplinary action.

## **No Retaliation**

DESPP strictly forbids retaliation against employees who report discrimination, including harassment, or who participate in internal or external investigations involving such conduct. Agents of DESPP shall not retaliate against, coerce, intimidate, threaten, harass, or interfere with any individual exercising or enjoying their rights under Federal or State law or because an individual aided or encouraged any other individual in the exercise of rights granted or protected by State or Federal law. All employees are strongly urged to report all instances of retaliation via one of the avenues listed above.

## **Investigating Complaints**

DESPP takes all complaints and reports of harassment and discrimination seriously. All complaints and reports will be investigated promptly. All employees are expected to cooperate fully with all administrative complaint investigations and any corrective actions taken by DESPP as a result of such investigations.

## **Corrective Action**

If an investigation confirms that discrimination or harassment prohibited under this policy has occurred, DESPP will take corrective action promptly. Discipline up to and including discharge from state service may be imposed.



Ronnell A. Higgins  
Commissioner, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection

3/28/24  
Date