

METRO WEST COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

A. *Statement of Policy.* Metro West Council of Government is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of Metro West to administer all of its employment practices, including those pertaining to recruitment, hiring, placement, transfer, promotion or demotion, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, layoff or termination, and selection for training in a nondiscriminatory manner without regard to race, creed, color, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, national origin, or any other basis prohibited by applicable federal, state or local fair employment laws or regulations.

Any questions or concerns regarding Metro West's equal employment opportunity policies may be directed to the Executive Director.

B. *Purpose.* The purpose of this policy is to maintain a healthy work environment and to provide procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolving complaints of harassment. (Note: For complaints involving incidents of sexual harassment, please refer to Metro West's sexual harassment policy and procedures.)

C. *Prohibited Activity.*

1. No employee shall either explicitly or implicitly ridicule, mock, deride, or belittle any other employee.
2. Employees shall not make offensive or derogatory comments based upon race, creed, color, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, national origin or any other legally protected characteristics, either directly or indirectly to another employee. Such harassment is a prohibited form of discrimination under state and federal employment law and is considered misconduct subject to disciplinary action.

3. Such conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

D. *Responsibilities.*

1. Each employee is responsible for assisting in prevention of harassment through the following acts:
 - a. Refraining from participation in, or encouragement of, actions that could be perceived as harassment.
 - b. Reporting acts of harassment to the Executive Director.
 - c. Encouraging any employee, who confides that he/she is being harassed, to report these acts to the Executive Director.
2. The Executive Director shall be responsible for preventing acts of harassment. These responsibilities include:
 - a. Monitoring the workplace environment on a daily basis for signs that harassment may be occurring
 - b. Counseling all employees on the types of behavior prohibited and procedures for reporting and resolving complaints of harassment.
 - c. Stopping any observed acts that may be considered harassment and taking appropriate steps to intervene, whether or not the involved employees are within his/her line of supervision.
 - d. Taking immediate action to limit the work contact between employees where there has been a complaint of harassment, pending investigation.
3. Assist any employee, who comes to that individual with a complaint of harassment, in documenting and filing a complaint.
4. Failure to take action to stop known harassment will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

E. *Complaint Procedures.* The employee shall document all incidents of harassment in order to provide an adequate record for investigation. Employees encountering harassment should, if possible, tell the person that his or her actions are unwelcome and offensive, however,

it is recognized that power and status disparities between an alleged harasser and a target may make such a confrontation impossible. In the event that such informal, direct communication between individuals is either ineffective or impossible, or even when such communication between the individuals has occurred, the complaint reporting procedures outlined herein should be followed.

1. Any employee who believes that he/she is being harassed shall report the incident(s) to the Executive Director as soon as possible so that steps may be taken to protect the employee from further harassment and so that appropriate investigative and disciplinary measures may be initiated. In the event the Executive Director is the person accused of the alleged harassment, the report should be made to the President of the Board of Directors.
2. The Executive Director or the President of the Board of Directors, as the case may be, shall meet with the employee and document the incident(s) complained of, the person(s) accused of performing or participating in the harassment, and the date(s) on which the harassment allegedly occurred.
3. A file of the harassment complaint shall be maintained in a secure location.

F. *Time Frame for Reporting Complaints.* Prompt reporting of complaints is encouraged so that rapid response and appropriate action may be taken. Thus, all complaints should be reported within six (6) months of the alleged harassment.

G. *Disciplinary Action.* Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee found to have engaged in harassment of any other employee. The extent of such sanctions may depend in part upon the length and conditions of employment of the particular employee and the nature of the offense. The Executive Director has the right to impose any sanction or any combination of sanctions, up to and including immediate termination, to deal with unreasonable conduct or discrimination.

Where a hostile work environment has been found to exist, all reasonable steps will be taken to eliminate the conduct creating such an environment.

H. *Protection against Retaliation.* No retaliation against an individual who makes a report of harassment, an individual who assists or who cooperates in the investigation will be permitted. Retaliation is a serious violation of this harassment policy and should be reported immediately. Any person found to have retaliated against another individual for reporting harassment or an individual who assists or who cooperates in the investigation will be subject to the same disciplinary action provided for harassment offenders.

I. *Appeal.* Complainants or employees accused of harassment may file an appeal in accordance with proper procedures when they disagree with the investigation or disposition of a harassment claim. Appeals must be in writing and directed to the Executive Director. Every employee shall have all of the rights afforded to him or her under the Whistleblower Act and/or the Illinois Human Rights Act.