

SAMPLE POLICY ON ZERO TOLERANCE FOR HARASSMENT

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Below is a sample policy, developed from a range of sources, that can be modified by organizations. It is intended to cover actions by or towards Directors, employees, contractors, and volunteers and to include actions in any situation involving the work relationship both onsite and offsite (e.g., meetings offsite, office parties):

Harassment is defined as any unwanted physical or verbal conduct that offends or humiliates the recipient, that interferes with their ability to work and learn or leads to adverse job-related consequences, and that any reasonable person ought to have known would be unwelcome. It does not include the legitimate exercise of supervisory authority regarding performance reviews, work evaluations, or valid disciplinary measures. It may include direct or implied threats of firing, loss of promotion or loss of pay raise, or may create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work setting. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to, racial or sexual slurs, name calling, racist or sexist jokes, negative stereotyping, physical assault, bullying, threats, demeaning pictures, posters and graffiti.

Harassment includes the following categories of behavior, whether the behavior occurs once or many times:

a) Discriminatory behavior

Discrimination refers to treating people differently, negatively, or adversely because of one or more of the following prohibited grounds of discrimination: race, color, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, or pardoned criminal conviction.

b) Personal harassment

Personal harassment includes objectionable conduct, comment, or display made on either a one-time or continuous basis that demeans, belittles, or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment on the part of the recipient. It may or may not be linked to discriminatory behavior.

c) Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment refers to any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature, whether on a one-time basis or a series of incidents, that might reasonably be expected to cause offence or humiliation or that might reasonably be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment, an opportunity for training or promotion, receipt of services, or a contract.

Examples of behavior that can constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted touching, patting or leering

- sexual assault
- inquiries or comments about a person's sex life
- telephone calls with sexual overtones
- gender-based insults or jokes causing embarrassment or humiliation
- repeated unwanted social or sexual invitations
- inappropriate or unwelcome focus/comments on a person's physical attributes or appearance

d) Bullying

Bullying consists of behavior to attack and diminish another by subjecting the recipient to unjustified criticism and trivial fault-finding, humiliating the recipient (especially in front of others), and/or ignoring, overruling, isolating and excluding the recipient. If from a superior, bullying may include setting up the recipient for failure by setting unrealistic goals or deadlines, or denying necessary information and resources; either overloading the recipient with work or taking all work away (sometimes replacing proper work with demeaning jobs); or increasing responsibility while removing authority.

e) Abuse of authority

Abuse of authority refers to an individual improperly using the power and authority inherent in a position to endanger a person's job, undermine the performance of that job, threaten the person's economic livelihood, or in any way interfere with or influence a person's career. It is the exercise of authority in a manner that serves no legitimate work purpose and ought reasonably to be known to be inappropriate. Examples of abuse of authority include, but are not limited to, such acts or misuse of power as intimidation, threats, blackmail, or coercion.

f) Poisoned work environment

A **poisoned work environment** is characterized by an activity or behavior, not necessarily directed at anyone in particular, that creates a hostile or offensive workplace. Examples of a poisoned work environment include but are not limited to: graffiti, sexual, racial or religious insults or jokes, abusive treatment of an employee, and the display of pornographic or other offensive material.