

TOWN OF CHELMSFORD SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

I. Introduction

It is the goal of the Town of Chelmsford to promote a workplace that is free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of employees occurring in the workplace or in other settings in which employees may find themselves in connection with their employment is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. To achieve our goal of providing a workplace free from sexual harassment, the conduct that is described in this policy will not be tolerated and we have provided a procedure by which inappropriate conduct will be dealt with, if encountered by employees.

This Policy may apply to conduct that occurs between co-workers that takes place outside the workplace (including, but not limited to, online conduct or conduct utilizing the internet or other electronic media), or during non-work hours. When the conduct complained of occurs outside of the workplace or during non-work hours, the Town of Chelmsford may consider the following and other factors in assessing whether the conduct constitutes conduct in violation of this Policy;

- whether the event at which the conduct occurred is linked to the workplace in any way, such as at a Town of Chelmsford sponsored function;
- whether the conduct occurred during work hours;
- the context of conduct that occurs outside of normal work hours and whether there is any connection to the workplace;
- the severity of the alleged outside-of-work conduct;
- the work relationship of the complainant and alleged harasser, which includes whether the alleged harasser is a supervisor and whether the alleged harasser and complainant come into contact with one another on the job;
- whether the conduct adversely affected the terms and conditions of the complainant's employment or impacted the complainant's work environment.

Because the Town of Chelmsford takes allegations of unlawful discrimination and harassment seriously, we will respond promptly to complaints and where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

Please note that while this Policy sets forth our goals of promoting a workplace that is free of sexual harassment, the Policy is not designed or intended to limit our authority to discipline or take remedial action for workplace conduct which we deem unacceptable,

regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the legal definitions of discrimination or harassment.

II. Definition of Sexual Harassment

In Massachusetts, the legal definition for sexual harassment is this:

“Sexual harassment” means sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- (a) submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or as a basis for employment decisions; or,
- (b) such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive work environment.

Under these definitions, direct or implied requests by a supervisor for sexual favors in exchange for actual or promised job benefits such as favorable reviews, salary increases, promotions, increased benefits, or continued employment constitutes sexual harassment.

The legal definition of sexual harassment is broad and in addition to the above examples, other sexually-oriented conduct, whether it is intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a work place environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to male or female workers may also constitute sexual harassment. This can include conduct that is aimed at a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct, which if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending upon the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances – whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written, or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one’s sex life; comment on an individual’s body, comment about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one’s sexual experiences, and,

- Discussion of one's sexual activities.

All employees should take special note that, as stated above, retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment, and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization.

III. Complaints of Sexual Harassment

If any of our employees believes that they have been subjected to sexual harassment, it is our policy to provide the employee with the right to file a complaint with our organization. This may be done in writing or orally.

If you would like to file a complaint you may do so by contacting:

- Human Resources Director is designated the Town Offices Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer. They can be reached at 978-250-5288.
- Finance Director, Alternate Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer. They can be reached at 978-244-3390.
- Chelmsford Public Schools Superintendent is designated the School Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer. They can be reached at 978-251-5100 x6916.
- Director of Personnel and Professional Learning, Alternate Grievance Officer. They can be reached at 978-251-5100 x6904.

These persons are also available to discuss any concerns you may have and to provide information to you about our policy on sexual harassment and our complaint process.

IV. Sexual Harassment Investigation

When we receive the complaint we will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Our investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. We will also interview the person alleged to have committed sexual harassment. When we have completed our investigation, we will, to the extent appropriate inform the person filing the complaint and the person alleged to have committed the conduct of the results of that investigation.

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct, and where appropriate we will also impose disciplinary action.

V. Disciplinary Action

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by one of our employees, we will take such action as is appropriate under the circumstances. Such actions may include: counseling, informal or formal reprimands, written or verbal warnings, suspension, reduction in pay, reduction in duties, transfers, and other formal sanctions including termination from employment.

VI. State and Federal Remedies

In addition to the above, if you believe you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you may file a formal complaint with either or both of the government agencies set forth below. Using our complaint process does not prohibit you from filing a complaint with these agencies. Each of the agencies has a short time period for filing a claim (EEOC – 300 days; MCAD – 300 days).

1. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

John F. Kennedy Federal Building
475 Government Center
Boston, MA 02203
Phone: 800-669-4000
TTY: 800-669-6820

2. The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

Boston Office

One Ashburton Place
Sixth Floor, Room 601
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: 617-994-6000
TTY: 617-994-6196

Springfield Office

436 Dwight Street
Second Floor, Room 220
Springfield, MA 01103
Phone: 413-739-2145

Worcester Office

Worcester City Hall
455 Main Street, Room 100
Worcester, MA 01608
508-799-8010
508-799-8490 – FAX

New Bedford Office

800 Purchase St., Rm. 501
New Bedford, MA 02740
508-990-2390
508-990-4260 – FAX