

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

The Webster Parish Communications District is committed to providing a workplace that is free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment in the workplace is against the law and will not be tolerated. When the WPCD determines that an allegation of sexual harassment is credible, it will take prompt and appropriate corrective action.

### **What Is Sexual Harassment?**

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- An employment decision affecting that individual is made because the individual submitted to or rejected the unwelcome conduct; or
- The unwelcome conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or abusive work environment.
- Certain behaviors, such as conditioning promotions, awards, training or other job benefits upon acceptance of unwelcome actions of a sexual nature, are always wrong.

Unwelcome actions such as the following are inappropriate and, depending on the circumstances, may in and of themselves meet the definition of sexual harassment or contribute to a hostile work environment:

- Sexual pranks, or repeated sexual teasing, jokes, or innuendo, in person or via e-mail;
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature;
- Touching or grabbing of a sexual nature;
- Repeatedly standing too close to or brushing up against a person;
- Repeatedly asking a person to socialize during off-duty hours when the person has said no or has indicated he or she is not interested (supervisors in particular should be careful not to pressure their employees to socialize);
- Giving gifts or leaving objects that are sexually suggestive;
- Repeatedly making sexually suggestive gestures;
- Making or posting sexually demeaning or offensive pictures, cartoons or other materials in the workplace;
- Off-duty, unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that affects the work environment.

A victim of sexual harassment can be a man or a woman. The victim can be of the same sex as the harasser. The harasser can be a supervisor, co-worker, other WPCD employee, or a non-employee who has a business relationship with the Webster Parish Communications District.

## **THE WPCD's RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS POLICY**

If the WPCD receives an allegation of sexual harassment, or has reason to believe sexual harassment is occurring, it will take the necessary steps to ensure that the matter is promptly investigated and addressed. If the allegation is determined to be credible, the WPCD will take immediate and effective measures to end the unwelcome behavior. The WPCD is committed to take action if it learns of possible sexual harassment, even if the individual does not wish to file a formal complaint.

The WPCD's Administrative Office is the main contact point for questions or concerns about sexual harassment. This office has responsibility for investigating or overseeing investigations of alleged sexual harassment and is committed to ensuring that all investigations of sexual harassment are conducted in a prompt, thorough, and impartial manner.

Supervisors and other responsible WPCD board officials who observe, are informed of, or reasonably suspect incidents of possible sexual harassment must immediately report such incidents to Admin office, which will either initiate or oversee a prompt investigation. Failure to report such incidents to WPCD will be considered a violation of this policy and may result in disciplinary action. WPCD will provide guidance as needed on investigating and handling the potential harassment. Supervisors should take effective measures to ensure no further apparent or alleged harassment occurs pending completion of an investigation.

The WPCD will seek to protect the identities of the alleged victim and harasser, except as reasonably necessary (for example, to complete an investigation successfully). The WPCD will also take the necessary steps to protect from retaliation those employees who in good faith report incidents of potential sexual harassment. It is a violation of both federal law and this policy to retaliate against someone who has reported possible sexual harassment. Violators may be subject to discipline.

Employees who have been found by the WPCD to have subjected another employee to unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether such behavior meets the legal definition of sexual harassment or not, will be subject to discipline or other appropriate management action. Discipline will be appropriate to the circumstances, ranging from a letter of reprimand through suspensions without pay of varying lengths to separation for cause. A verbal or written admonishment, while not considered formal discipline, may also be considered.

## **EMPLOYEES RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS POLICY**

Any employee who believes he or she has been the target of sexual harassment is encouraged to inform the offending person orally or in writing that such conduct is unwelcome and offensive and must stop.

If the employee does not wish to communicate directly with the offending person, or if such communication has been ineffective, the employee has multiple avenues for reporting allegations of sexual harassment and/or pursuing resolution.

Employees are encouraged to report the unwelcome conduct as soon as possible to a responsible WPCD official. It is usually most effective -- although it is not required--that the official be within the employee's supervisory chain.