



OFFICE OF PERSONNEL & LABOR RELATIONS

CITY OF SYRACUSE, MAYOR BEN WALSH

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY (Effective October 2018)

Donna D. Briscoe
Assistant Director

INTRODUCTION

The City of Syracuse (the “City”) is committed to maintaining a workplace free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a form of workplace discrimination. All employees are required to work in a manner that prevents sexual harassment in the workplace. This Policy is one component of the City’s commitment to a discrimination-free work environment. Sexual harassment is against the law¹ and all employees have a legal right to a workplace free from sexual harassment and employees are urged to report sexual harassment by filing a report form internally with the City.

Policy:

1. The City’s policy applies to all employees, applicants for employment, interns, whether paid or unpaid, contractors and persons conducting business, regardless of immigration status, with the City. In the remainder of this document, the term “employees” refers to this collective group.
2. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Any employee or individual covered by this policy who engages in sexual harassment or retaliation will be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action (e.g., counseling, suspension, termination).
3. Retaliation Prohibition: No person covered by this Policy shall be subject to adverse action because the employee reports an incident of sexual harassment, provides information, or otherwise assists in any investigation of a sexual harassment report. The City will not tolerate such retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports or provides information about suspected sexual harassment. Any employee of the City who retaliates against anyone involved in a sexual harassment investigation will be subjected to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All employees, paid or unpaid interns, or non-employees¹ working in the workplace who believe they have been subject to such retaliation should inform a supervisor, manager, or the Director of Personnel. All employees, paid or unpaid interns or non-employees who believe they have been a target of such retaliation may also seek relief in other available forums, as explained below in the section on Legal Protections.

¹ While this policy specifically addresses sexual harassment, harassment because of and discrimination against persons of all protected classes is prohibited. In New York State, such classes include age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, marital status, domestic violence victim status, gender identity and criminal history.

² A non-employee is someone who is (or is employed by) a contractor, subcontractor, vendor, consultant, or anyone providing services in the workplace. Protected non-employees include persons commonly referred to as independent contractors, “gig” workers and temporary workers. Also included are persons providing equipment repair, cleaning services or any other services provided pursuant to a contract with the employer.

**Office of Personnel &
Labor Relations**
233 E. Washington St
City Hall, Room 312
Syracuse, N.Y. 13202

Office 315 448-8780
Fax 315 448-8761

www.syr.gov.net

GROWTH. DIVERSITY. OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.

4. Sexual harassment is a violation of our policies, is unlawful, and may subject the City to liability for harm to targets of sexual harassment. Harassers may also be individually subject to liability. Employees of every level who engage in sexual harassment, including managers and supervisors who engage in sexual harassment or who allow such behavior to continue, will be penalized for such misconduct.
5. The City will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation that ensures due process for all parties, whenever management receives a report about sexual harassment, or otherwise knows of possible sexual harassment occurring. The City will keep the investigation confidential to the extent possible. Effective corrective action will be taken whenever sexual harassment is found to have occurred. All employees, including managers and supervisors, are required to cooperate with any internal investigation of sexual harassment.
6. All employees are encouraged to report any harassment or behaviors that violate this policy. The City will provide all employees a reporting form for employees to report harassment and file reports.
7. Managers and supervisors are **required** to report any grievance that they receive, or any harassment that they observe or become aware of, to their Department Head or the Director of Personnel.
8. This policy applies to all employees, paid or unpaid interns, and non-employees and all must follow and uphold this policy. This policy must be provided to all employees and should be posted prominently in all work locations to the extent practicable (for example, in a main office, not an offsite work location) and be provided to employees upon hiring.
9. The City aims to have a professional, respectful workplace where all employees are free from sexually offensive, hostile or intimidating conduct. Therefore, the City maintains the right to take corrective action against an employee who engages in harassing conduct that it deems inappropriate in the workplace, even if that conduct does not rise to the level of sexual harassment under the law.

What Is “Sexual Harassment”?

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is unlawful under federal and state, and (where applicable) local law. Sexual harassment includes harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, self-identified or perceived sex, gender expression, gender identity and the status of being transgender.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature, or which is directed at an individual because of that individual's sex when:

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, even if the reporting individual is not the intended target of the sexual harassment;
- Such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual's employment.

A sexually harassing hostile work environment includes, but is not limited to, words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation or physical violence which are of a sexual nature, or which are directed at an individual because of that individual's sex. Sexual harassment also consists of any unwanted verbal or physical advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks made by someone which are offensive or objectionable to the recipient, which cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation, which interfere with the recipient's job performance.

Sexual harassment also occurs when a person in authority tries to trade job benefits for sexual favors. This can include hiring, promotion, continued employment or any other terms, conditions or privileges of employment. This is also called "quid pro quo" harassment.

Any employee who feels harassed should report the conduct so that any violation of this policy can be corrected promptly. Any harassing conduct, even a single incident, can be addressed under this policy.

Examples of sexual harassment

The following describes some of the types of acts that may be unlawful sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited:

- Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as:
 - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body or poking another employee's body;
 - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults.
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, such as:
 - Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target's job performance evaluation, a promotion or other job benefits or detriments;
 - Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities.

- Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience, which create a hostile work environment.
- Sex stereotyping occurs when conduct or personality traits are considered inappropriate simply because they may not conform to other people's ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace, such as:
 - Displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on workplace computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the workplace.
- Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and the status of being transgender, such as:
 - Interfering with, destroying or damaging a person's workstation, tools or equipment, or otherwise interfering with the individual's ability to perform the job;
 - Sabotaging an individual's work;
 - Bullying, yelling, name-calling.

Who can be a target of sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. New York Law protects employees, paid or unpaid interns, and non-employees, including independent contractors, and those employed by companies contracting to provide services in the workplace. Harassers can be a superior, a subordinate, a coworker or anyone in the workplace including an independent contractor, contract worker, vendor, client, customer or visitor.

Where can sexual harassment occur?

Unlawful sexual harassment is not limited to the physical workplace itself. It can occur while employees are traveling for business or at employer sponsored events or parties. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage by employees can constitute unlawful workplace harassment, even if they occur away from the workplace premises, on personal devices or during non-work hours.

Retaliation

Unlawful retaliation can be any action that could discourage a worker from coming forward to make or support a sexual harassment claim or report. Adverse action need not be job-related or occur in the workplace to constitute unlawful retaliation (e.g., threats of physical violence outside of work hours).

Such retaliation is unlawful under federal, and state, and (where applicable) local law. The New York State Human Rights Law protects any individual who has engaged in “protected activity.” Protected activity occurs when a person has:

- made a report of sexual harassment, either internally or with any anti-discrimination agency;
- participated in an internal or external investigation of reported sexual harassment;
- testified or assisted in a proceeding involving sexual harassment under the Human Rights Law or other anti-discrimination law;
- opposed sexual harassment by making a verbal or informal report to management, or by simply informing a supervisor or manager of harassment;
- reported that another employee has been sexually harassed; or
- encouraged a fellow employee to report harassment.

Even if the alleged harassment does not turn out to rise to the level of a violation of law, the individual is protected from retaliation if the person had a good faith belief that the practices were unlawful. However, the retaliation provision is not intended to protect persons making intentionally false charges of harassment.

Reporting Sexual Harassment

Preventing sexual harassment is everyone’s responsibility. The City cannot prevent or remedy sexual harassment unless it knows about it. Any employee, paid or unpaid intern or non-employee who has been subjected to behavior that may constitute sexual harassment is encouraged to report such behavior to a supervisor, manager or their Department Head or the Director of Personnel. Anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of potential instances of sexual harassment should report such behavior to a supervisor, manager or their Department Head or the Director of Personnel.

Reports of sexual harassment may be made verbally or in writing. A form for submission of a written report is attached to this Policy, and all employees are encouraged to use this reporting form. Employees who are reporting sexual harassment on behalf of other employees should use the review form and note that it is on another employee’s behalf.

Supervisory Responsibilities

All supervisors and managers who receive a review or information about suspected sexual harassment, observe what may be sexually harassing behavior or for any reason suspect that sexual harassment is occurring, **are required** to report such suspected sexual harassment to their Department Head or the Director of Personnel.

In addition to being subject to discipline if they engaged in sexually harassing conduct themselves, supervisors and managers will be subject to discipline for failing to report suspected sexual harassment or otherwise knowingly allowing sexual harassment to continue.

Supervisors and managers will also be subject to discipline for engaging in any retaliation.

Report and Investigation of Sexual Harassment

All reports or information about sexual harassment will be investigated, whether that information was reported in verbal or written form. Investigations will be conducted in a timely manner, and will be confidential to the extent possible.

An investigation of any report, information or knowledge of suspected sexual harassment will be prompt and thorough, commenced immediately and completed as soon as possible. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible. All persons involved, including claimants, witnesses and alleged harassers will be accorded due process, as outlined below, to protect their rights to a fair and impartial investigation.

Any employee may be required to cooperate as needed in an investigation of suspected sexual harassment. As detailed in the Retaliation section of this Policy, the City will not tolerate retaliation against employees who file reports, support another's report or participate in an investigation regarding a violation of this policy.

While the process may vary from case to case, investigations will generally be done in accordance with the following steps:

- Upon receipt of the report, the Director of Personnel or his or her designee will conduct an immediate review of the allegations, and take any interim actions (e.g., instructing the respondent to refrain from communications with the claimant), as appropriate. If the report is verbal, the Director will encourage the individual to complete the "Reporting Form" in writing. If he or she refuses, the Director or his/her designee will prepare a Reporting Form based on the verbal reporting.
- If documents, emails or phone records are relevant to the investigation, the City will take steps to obtain and preserve them.

- The Director or his/her designee will:
 - Request and review all relevant documents, including all electronic communications.
 - Interview all parties involved, including any relevant witnesses;
 - Create a written documentation of the investigation, which contains the following:
 - A list of all documents reviewed, along with a detailed summary of relevant documents;
 - A list of names of those interviewed, along with a detailed summary of their statements;
 - A timeline of events;
 - A summary of prior relevant incidents, reported or unreported; and
 - The basis for the conclusion and final resolution of the report.
- All written documentation and associated documents will be stored in a secure and confidential location.
- Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the Director of Personnel will confer with the Department Head of the alleged harasser in determining what, if any, corrective actions should be taken with respect to the alleged harasser. The Director of Personnel or his/her designee will promptly notify the individual who reported and the individual(s) about whom the report was made of the outcome of the investigation. The Department Head, in consultation with the Director of Personnel, will implement appropriate corrective actions.

Legal Protections And External Remedies

Sexual harassment is not only prohibited by the City but is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law.

Aside from the internal process at the City, employees may also choose to pursue legal remedies with the following governmental entities. While a private attorney is not required to file a report/complaint with a governmental agency, you may seek the legal advice of an attorney.

In addition to those outlined below, employees in certain industries may have additional legal protections.

State Human Rights Law (HRL)

The Human Rights Law (HRL), codified as N.Y. Executive Law, art. 15, § 290 et seq., applies to all employers in New York State with regard to sexual harassment, and protects employees, paid or unpaid interns and non-employees, regardless of immigration status. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court.

Complaints with DHR may be filed any time **within one year** of the harassment. If an individual did not file at DHR, they can sue directly in state court under the HRL, **within three years** of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court.

Reporting internally to the City does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The one year or three years is counted from date of the most recent incident of harassment.

You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR.

DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases are forwarded to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found after a hearing, DHR has the power to award relief, which varies but may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or redress the damage caused, including paying of monetary damages, attorney's fees and civil fines.

DHR's main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit: www.dhr.ny.gov.

Contact DHR at (888) 392-3644 or visit dhr.ny.gov/complaint for more information about filing a complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, notarized and mailed to DHR. The website also contains contact information for DHR's regional offices across New York State.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act (codified as 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.). An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint, and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred, at which point the EEOC will issue a Right to Sue letter permitting the individual to file a complaint in federal court.

The EEOC does not hold hearings or award relief, but may take other action including pursuing cases in federal court on behalf of complaining parties. Federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. In general, private employers must have at least 15 employees to come within the jurisdiction of the EEOC.

An employee alleging discrimination at work can file a "Charge of Discrimination." The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820), visiting their website at www.eeoc.gov or via email at info@eeoc.gov.

If an individual filed an administrative complaint with DHR, DHR will file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

Contact the Syracuse Police Department

If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the Syracuse Police Department at (315) 442-5200.

CITY OF SYRACUSE



SEXUAL HARASSMENT REPORTING FORM

New York States Law requires all employers to adopt a sexual harassment policy that includes a reporting form to report alleged incidents of sexual harassment.

If you believe that you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you are encouraged to complete this form and submit it to your Departments Personnel Contact or the Office of Personnel & Labor Relations. You will not be retaliated against for filing a report.

If you are more comfortable reporting verbally or in another manner, your employer should complete this form, provide you with a copy and follow its sexual harassment prevention policy by investigating the claims as outlined at the end of this form.

For additional resources, visit: ny.gov/programs/combating-sexual-harassment-workplace

CLAIMANT INFORMATION

Your Name: _____

Work Address: _____

Work Phone: _____ Email: _____

Job Title: _____

Is claim on your behalf? YES NO

If no, who are you making this claim on behalf of? _____

SELECTED PREFERRED COMMUNICATION METHOD:

Email _____ Phone _____ In person

SUPERVISORY INFORMATION

Immediate Supervisor's Name & Title _____

Work Phone: _____

Work Address: _____

Have you notified your supervisor directly? YES NO

CLAIM DETAILS

1. Your report of Sexual Harassment is made about:

Name(s): _____

Title: _____

Work Address: _____

Work Phone: _____

2. Relationship to claimant: Supervisor Subordinate Co-Worker Other

3. Please describe what happened and how it is affecting you and your work. Please use additional sheets of paper if necessary and attach any relevant documents or evidence.

4. Date(s) sexual harassment occurred: _____

▪ Is the sexual harassment still continuing? Yes No

5. Please list the name and contact information of any witnesses or individuals who may have information related to your claim.

The last question is optional, but may help the investigation.

6. Have you previously reported or provided information (verbal or written) about related incidents? If yes, when and to whom did you report or provide information.

If you have retained counsel and would like us to work with them, please provide their contact information.

Name _____ Contact Information: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

