

## Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Office

It is the policy of this office that unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and any other verbal, physical or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when the conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment or the holding of office, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment and shall not be tolerated.

Examples of sexual harassment include the following:

- Physical assaults of a sexual nature such as rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults and intentional physical conduct that is sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against another employee's body, or poking another employee's body.
- Unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, or other sexual comments, such as sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks, jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience.
- Preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment to an employee for submitting to sexual conduct including soliciting or attempting to solicit any employee to engage in sexual activity for compensation or reward.
- Subjecting or threats of subjecting an employee to unwelcome sexual attention or conduct or intentionally making performance of the employee's job more difficult because of that employee's sex.
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace.
- Retaliation of any nature for sexual harassment complaints.

Any employee who feels that he/she has been sexually harassed should report the situation to the Assessor. All complaints will be addressed immediately. If an employee has a complaint against the Assessor or feels that the Assessor has not addressed the situation in a timely manner, they should report this directly to the **Louisiana Commission of Human Rights** at 1001 N. 23rd St., Baton Rouge, Louisiana. **Phone: 1-225-342-6969** or the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** - New Orleans District Office at 500 Poydras St., Suite 800, New Orleans, Louisiana. **Phone: 1-800-669-4000.**

This policy establishes a procedure to report and address complaints of sexually inappropriate behavior. This policy is intended to supplement rather than replace or supersede the private and/or statutory procedures regarding sexually inappropriate workplace behavior available to employees under state and federal law, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and La. R.S. 23:331 et seq. Employees should be aware that there are certain procedures and time delays, including the filing of a complaint with the Louisiana Commission on Human Rights(LCHR) or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) , which must be satisfied prior to initiating civil litigation regarding inappropriate workplace sexual behavior.

Any form of sexual harassment in the workplace will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken to end sexual harassment and to prevent the re-occurrence of any such misconduct. All complaints will be fully investigated. "Informal" complaints or requests to withhold an investigation (unless or until a future occurrence) will be treated the same as a formal complaint and investigated immediately. Whether or not a particular incident is the result of a social relationship, it requires an immediate factual and thorough investigation. The investigation will be thorough and include interviews with the complainant, the accused, witnesses and other individuals possessing relevant information. Records, logs, reports, photos, or other documentation pertinent to the complaint will be reviewed. The investigative process will be memorialized, requiring that all involved prepare written statements or provide verbal statements that will be recorded. Persons called upon to participate in the investigation are required to answer all questions truthfully and cooperatively. Employees do not have the option of remaining silent or declining to be involved. Given the nature of this type of discrimination, the Assessor recognizes that false accusations of sexual harassment can also have serious effects on innocent individuals. Therefore, the investigative process will be conducted expeditiously and professionally, with appropriate emphasis on the rights of all involved.

To initiate a formal investigation into an alleged violation of this policy, employees will be asked to provide a written statement about the alleged misconduct to the Assessor. Complaints should be submitted as soon as possible after an incident has occurred. The Assessor may assist the complainant in completing the statement. To ensure the prompt and thorough investigation of a harassment complaint, the complainant should provide as much of the following information as is possible:

1. The name, department, and position of the person or persons allegedly causing the harassment.
2. A description of the incident(s) including the date(s), location(s), and the presence of any witnesses.
3. The effect of the incident(s) on the complainant's ability to perform his or her job or on other terms and conditions of his or her employment.
4. The names of other individuals who might have been subject to the same or similar harassment.
5. What, if any, steps the complainant has taken to try to stop the sexual harassment. **(Please note employees are not expected to handle any sexual harassment situation on their own at any time)**
6. Any other information the complainant believes to be relevant to the sexual harassment complaint.

All inquiries, complaints, and documentation of investigations are treated confidentially. Information is revealed strictly on a need-to-know basis. Information contained in a formal complaint is kept as confidential as possible. However, the identity of the complainant may be revealed to the respondent and witnesses. The Assessor will take adequate steps to ensure that

the complainant is protected from retaliation. All information pertaining to a sexual harassment complaint or investigation is maintained by the Assessor in secure files. The Assessor can answer any questions relating to the procedures for handling information related to sexual harassment complaints and investigations to complainants and respondents.

The Assessor will not retaliate against nor tolerate any retaliation against any employee because of reports of alleged sexual harassment or because of cooperation with any investigation. The Assessor may consult with an attorney to determine whether any conduct found to have occurred constitutes sexual harassment, as well as if a criminal law has been violated.

Upon completion of the investigation, the complaining employee and accused will be apprised of the outcome, with appropriate emphasis on the rights of all involved. Any employee, manager, or supervisor found by the Assessor, after appropriate investigation, to have sexually harassed another employee will be disciplined in accordance with applicable laws. Such action may include counseling, reprimand, suspension, demotion, or termination. If sexual harassment is found to have occurred, the Assessor will make subsequent inquiries to ensure that any such sexual harassment has not resumed and that the complainants/witnesses of any such harassment have not suffered any sort of retaliation during or after the investigation and throughout the duration of their employment.

All employees will be notified annually of their rights protecting them from sexual harassment, as well as their requirements as a public servant to comply with the sexual harassment prevention policy of this office. All employees are required annually to complete the required one hour of sexual harassment prevention training course set forth by the Assessor. Failure to complete this mandatory training will result in disciplinary actions.

The Assessor will compile an annual report by February first of each year containing information from the previous calendar year regarding the office's compliance with the requirements of RS 42:341-344. This report will include the number and percentage of public servants in the office who have completed the training requirements, the number of sexual harassment complaints received by the Assessor, the number of complaints which resulted in a finding that sexual harassment occurred, the number of complaints in which the finding of sexual harassment resulted in discipline or corrective action, and the amount of time it took to resolve each complaint. This report will be public record and available to the public in the manner provided by the Public Records Law.