



NATCHITOCHES PARISH SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Human Resources Division

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Non-Discrimination Notice

1-5. Prohibited Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation

PHILOSOPHY

Employees of the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office ("NPSO") deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, and to work in a professional environment free of harassment and discrimination. Left unchecked, harassment and discrimination, regardless of nature or degree, undermine the integrity of the employment relationship, debilitate morale, dedication and loyalty, compromise equal employment opportunities, and significantly interfere with the mission of the organization.

NPSO strives to maintain a workplace that fosters mutual respect and promotes harmonious productive working relationships. To accomplish this, NPSO prohibits and will not tolerate harassment, discrimination or retaliation or any behavior that intimidates, exploits, insults, demeans, disrespects, or embarrasses any employee or other individual in the workplace [\[1\]](#)

To accomplish this, NPSO has formulated this policy to define harassment, discrimination and retaliation that is prohibited in the workplace, and the procedure for effectively reporting such conduct. Employees should realize that the behavior proscribed by this policy includes words and conduct that are inappropriate, offensive or create a hostile working environment. As such, any behavior which negatively impacts the workforce is prohibited even though such behavior may not constitute actionable harassment or discrimination as defined by law.

Prevention and elimination of inappropriate behavior requires the personal involvement and commitment of every NPSO employee. Unless and until administration is apprised of its occurrence, corrective action to address such behavior cannot be taken. Through this policy, NPSO seeks to reinforce its intolerance of inappropriate behavior, and encourages employees who experience, observe, or are informed of such behavior to promptly initiate the reporting process set forth in this policy. Employees can be assured that NPSO will objectively and thoroughly investigate reports; implement preventive measures to protect against recurrence; impose corrective action to address violations; and protect complainants and individuals involved in the investigative process from any form of harassment, reprisal, or retaliation.

PURPOSE

Through this policy, the NPSO seeks to:

- Unequivocally state intolerance for harassment, discrimination and other inappropriate behavior
- Identify the broad scope of such prohibited behavior
- Establish an effective, uniform reporting and investigative process
- Require prompt action to protect against recurrence of the prohibited behavior
- Ensure resolution that imposes appropriate corrective action
- Protect complainants and individuals involved in the investigative process from harassment, reprisal, or retaliation
- Respect confidentiality and the privacy of employees

This policy establishes a procedure to administratively report and address complaints of inappropriate behavior. It is not in any way intended to replace or supersede the statutory or regulatory rights regarding harassment or discrimination available to employees under federal and state law.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all NPSO employees regardless of position, rank or status. This includes appointed employees, classified and unclassified employees, full time, part time, seasonal and temporary employees. The tenets of this policy are equally applicable to appointing authorities, executive management, administrators, directors, managers, supervisors, staff members, student workers, and interns.

This policy also applies to non-employees, including visitors and individuals who transact business with NPSO such as vendors, maintenance personnel, clients, contractors, and consultants. These non-employees are prohibited from engaging in the behaviors prohibited in this policy and are also protected from experiencing such behavior by NPSO employees.

This policy applies not only to the customary workplace and work locations where NPSO employees may be assigned, but also prohibits such behavior while traveling for work, while attending conferences or off-site meetings, workshops, training, business trips, and business-related social events. In addition, this policy applies to off-duty, off-premises behaviors which has an impact on and a relation back to the workplace.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Prohibited discrimination and/or harassment may be defined as conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an employee because of sex, race, color, age, national origin, religion, disability, genetic information, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/reassignment, citizenship, pregnancy or child birth, sickle cell trait, veteran status, or any other status protected status. It can be explicit and overt, such as hostile acts, or subtle and implied, such as leering and innuendo. It can be intended or unintended with the determination or inappropriateness evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable person and without regard for the purpose or motive of the accused. Such inappropriate behavior may be by a person of either gender against a person of the same or opposite gender. Such behavior may include conduct of a supervisor, manager or administrator towards a subordinate employee, or conduct by one employee towards another employee of equal or greater rank. It may also include words or conduct by a vendor, contractor, client or visitor to NPSO. Finally, an employee may be the victim of inappropriate behavior even though not the target of such behavior.

Some examples that are not all inclusive and are for illustrative purposes only of conduct that may, alone or in cumulative effect, be prohibited discrimination and/or harassment include:

- **Verbal (spoken)** - Epithets, slurs, unwelcome jokes, bullying;
- **Non-Verbal (unspoken)** - Negative stereotyping, distributing or posting written or graphic material, bullying;
- **Physical** - Threats, intimidation, hostile acts, bullying

REPORTING PROCEDURE

Early reporting of inappropriate behavior enhances the credibility of the complainant and facilitates the investigative process. NPSO does not require a fixed reporting time or deadline-the sooner the better is preferred and immediately reporting is ideal. The initial report need only convey the occurrence of words or actions that are offensive and need not provide detailed information. This report can be verbal (in person or via telephone) or in writing (letter, memo, email, text) and need not utilize a specific form.

Any employee experiencing, witnessing or having knowledge, directly or indirectly, of inappropriate behavior by anyone or towards anyone associated with NPSO or on department premises, including any administrator,

manager, supervisor, co-worker, vendor, client or visitor, should immediately report the occurrence. Any such complaint may be made verbally or in writing. Under most circumstances, complaints should be made by the employee to his/her supervisor. If the complaint involves the employee's supervisor or someone within the direct line of supervision, or if the employee, for any reason, is uncomfortable reporting such behavior to a supervisor, he/she may report the incident to another supervisor or manager, or directly contact the Human Resources Director at 200 Church St., Natchitoches, Louisiana 71457 or (318) 357-7816. Supervisory personnel receiving a report of inappropriate behavior are required to immediately inform the Human Resources Director of the information provided.

INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINT

1. All reports of inappropriate behavior will ultimately be reported to the Human Resources Director who generally will direct the investigative process. Personnel in a need to know capacity will be apprised of the complaint.
2. NPSO will investigate **all** complaints. "Informal" complaints or requests to withhold investigation (unless or until a future occurrence) will be treated the same as a formal complaint and investigated immediately.
3. To prevent further occurrences or to preserve the integrity of the investigation, temporary reassignment, transfers, forced leave or other personnel actions permissible under the organization's policies may be utilized.
4. The investigation will be thorough and may 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.
5. The investigative process may require that all involved prepare written statements or provide verbal statements that will be recorded.
6. 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.
7. The investigative process will be conducted expeditiously and professionally, with appropriate emphasis on the rights of all involved.
8. To the extent possible, the investigative process will be conducted in a confidential manner, with only those in a need-to-know position involved. Employees who are called on to participate will be instructed that the complaint and all information provided during the investigation are to remain confidential. Employees are prohibited from obstructing or interfering with the investigation, which includes questioning or confronting any individual participating in the investigation.
9. Upon completion of the investigation, the Human Resources Director will apprise the Sheriff of the outcome and recommendations for resolution. With recommendations from the Disciplinary Board, the Sheriff's decision is final and concludes NPSO's internal administrative investigative process.

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

Any employee found, after appropriate investigation, to have engaged in inappropriate behavior will be disciplined in accordance with applicable law and the policies of the organization. Such action may include counseling, reprimand, suspension, demotion, reduction in pay or termination.

In addition to corrective action, other appropriate measures, including follow-up inquiries and re-training, will be utilized to ensure that the inappropriate behavior does not recur.

Regardless of the outcome, the complainant has the option of pursuing a claim under state or federal law.

Initiation of such a claim is not dependent upon the outcome nor completion of the NPSO's administrative investigation.

NON-RETALIATION

Any employee making a good faith complaint of inappropriate behavior will be protected from retaliation, reprisal and harassment. Likewise, any employee providing information or otherwise participating in the investigation of such a complaint will be protected from retaliation, reprisal and harassment.

If a complaint is made and the investigation reveals that retaliation, reprisal or harassment has occurred against a complaining employee or anyone participating in the investigative process appropriate, severe disciplinary action will be taken, including the possibility of termination.

VIOLATIONS

Any employee, regardless of rank or status, found to have violated the prohibitions of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. After investigation and satisfaction of due process requirements, corrective action may be imposed for the following:

- Failure by a supervisor or manager to timely report a complaint of inappropriate behavior
- Failure to participate in or cooperate with the investigative process
- Providing false information or withholding information during questioning
- Filing a false, malicious, or frivolous complaint
- Harassment, reprisal, or retaliation towards a complainant or anyone involved in the investigative process

Any employee, regardless of rank or status, who intentionally fails to properly and timely report inappropriate workplace behavior will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any employee found to have intentionally or maliciously falsely accused another of inappropriate workplace behavior will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. This prohibition is not intended to discourage employees from filing good faith complaints of behavior proscribed by this policy.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Questions or comments concerning harassment, discrimination or the interpretation or enforcement of this policy should be addressed to the Human Resources Director. To the extent possible, such inquiries will be maintained in strict confidence. Employees are reminded that complaints will be appropriately investigated notwithstanding the employee's request that no action be taken or that the investigative process be delayed.

[1] This policy specifically addresses harassment and discrimination in the workplace, which are collectively referred to as "Inappropriate Behavior". Employees should review NPSO Policy entitled "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace" for a comprehensive understanding of the prohibitions against sexual harassment specifically.