



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
Enterprise Policy

Human Resources 2018

Sexual Harassment Policy

04-02-18

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1. Scope

This policy applies to all State Executive Branch agencies and employees whether permanent, non-permanent, temporary, seasonal, full or part-time. Employees are also required to familiarize themselves with agency-specific sexual harassment policies.

2. Introduction

The State of Rhode Island promotes a workplace that is free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of employees occurring in the workplace or in other settings related to their employment is unlawful and will not be tolerated. 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 a workplace free from sexual harassment, there are procedures by which inappropriate conduct will be dealt.

The State of Rhode Island takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously, and will promptly respond to complaints of sexual harassment. Where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, action shall be taken to prevent further offending conduct and impose timely corrective action as is necessary, up to and including disciplinary action where appropriate.

Please note that while this policy sets forth goals of promoting a workplace that is free of sexual harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit the authority to immediately impose discipline or take remedial action for workplace conduct deemed unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of sexual harassment.

3. Definition of Sexual Harassment

In Rhode Island, "sexual harassment" means any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- (1) Submission to that conduct or those advances or requests is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; or
- (2) Submission to or rejection of the conduct or advances or requests by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual; or

(3) The conduct or advances or requests have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. (*R.1 Gen. Laws Section 28-51-1 and Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964*).

Under these definitions, direct or implied requests by a supervisor for sexual favors in exchange for actual, promised or implied job benefits, such as favorable reviews, salary increases, job opportunities and 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.

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 frequency and/or 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 or those of another person.

The complainant does not have to be the person at whom the unwelcome sexual conduct is directed. For example, the complainant can be an employee who is denied an employment opportunity or benefit where employment opportunities or benefits are granted because of another individual's submission to the employer's sexual advances or requests for sexual favors. The complainant, regardless of gender, may be a witness to and personally offended by such conduct.

All employees should take special note that, as stated above, 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 unlawful and will not be tolerated by the State of Rhode Island. Retaliation includes threats, intimidation, reprisals, and/or adverse employment actions against 1) a person in response to a complaint that employee has made about discrimination or harassment; 2) a person who assists in filing a complaint about discrimination or harassment; and/or 3) a person who has testified about discrimination or harassment.



4. Supervisor's Responsibilities

Supervisors who observe, witness, or are informed of inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature or incidents of sexual harassment must immediately report such behavior or incidents to the Division of Human Resources. The supervisor is required to report the behavior or incident regardless of whether a complaint is made or the conduct appears to be unwelcome, and even if the person providing information requests that no action be taken.

5. Complaints of Sexual Harassment

If any State employee believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, the employee has the right to file a complaint. This may be done in writing or orally.

Complaints may be filed by contacting your supervisor or the agency Human Resources liaison listed on the attached Agency Liaison Contact List and posted on the State of Rhode Island Division of Human Resources website at www.hr.ri.gov.

6. Complaint Process

When a state agency receives a complaint, it will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted by Human Resources in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. Human Resources will also interview the person alleged to have committed sexual harassment.

When a person who has presented an internal complaint requests the status of the complaint, Human Resources will provide a timely answer in writing to the complainant.

When the investigation is completed, the agency will, to the extent appropriate, inform in writing the person who filed the complaint and the person alleged to have committed the conduct of the results of that investigation.

7. Additional Remedy

In addition to filing a complaint with Human Resources, employees also may file complaints with the Associate Director for the Office of Diversity Equity and Opportunity (ODEO) in the Department of Administration or a member of staff within the ODEO/State Equal Opportunity Office (www.odeo.ri.gov). ODEO will investigate the complaint and also maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable (other than notification to the Agency Director, when appropriate):

If ODEO makes a determination that there is probable cause of discrimination, it will try to conciliate the complaint. If ODEO is unable to conciliate the complaint, ODEO will schedule a formal hearing. If, after a hearing, the Hearing Officer determines that sexual harassment occurred, the ODEO will present its findings and recommend corrective action. (Please note that if a



complainant files a charge with either or both agencies specified in Section 8 below, the ODEO will defer to the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (RICHR) or Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for investigation and/or resolution of the complaint).

8. State and Federal Remedies

In addition to the above, if an employee of the State of Rhode Island believes he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, he or she may file a formal complaint with either or both government agencies set forth below in accordance with applicable time limits. Using the State of Rhode Island's complaint filing process does not prohibit an employee from filing a complaint with these agencies.

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
www.eeoc.gov
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203
Phone: 1-800-669-4000
TTY: 1-800-669-6820

The Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (RICHR)
www.richr.ri.gov
180 Westminster Street, 3d Floor
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: 401-222-2661
TTY: 7-1-1

Where it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, the agency will act promptly to prevent further offending conduct and impose corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

9. Disciplinary Action

If it is determined that an employee has engaged in inappropriate conduct, the state agency will take action as is appropriate under the circumstances. Such action may range from counseling and training to disciplinary actions, including termination from employment.

10. Legal References

This policy is administered in accordance with the following:

Federal Law:

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.



Rhode Island General Laws:

Title 28, Chapters 5, 5.1, 6 and 51.

11. Signatures

Kyle A. Sebastian
Division Director

4/2/18
Date

David D.R.
Director of Administration

4/3/18
Date

