

HR/LR Policy #1436

Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited

Date Issued: 6/12/2019

Date Revised: 8/14/2023, 8/19/2024

Former AP: AP 1.2 Harassment Prohibited (04/07/88)

Authority: Enterprise Employee Resources

OVERVIEW

Objective

To create a work environment free from harassment and discrimination based on protected class.

Policy Statement

Any form of harassment or discrimination based on protected class is strictly prohibited. Individuals who believe they have been subject to harassment or discrimination based on protected class or retaliation as described in this policy, are encouraged to file a report with an appropriate authority, as set forth in Section II of this policy.

Any form of retaliation directed against an individual who opposes or reports protected class harassment or discrimination, or who participates in any investigation concerning protected class harassment or discrimination, is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Violations of this policy by state agency employees will be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge. Violations of this policy by third parties will be subject to appropriate action.

Sexual harassment is specifically addressed by [HR/LR Policy #1329 Sexual Harassment Prohibited](#).

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of, and third parties who have business interactions with, executive branch agencies as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 43A.02, subdivisions 2 and 22, and employees in the Office of the Legislative Auditor, Minnesota State Retirement System, Public Employee Retirement Association, and Teachers Retirement Association.

Definitions and Terms

Complainant

An individual who reports protected class harassment, discrimination, or retaliation.

Protected class

Protected classes under this policy are as follows:

- Race
- Color
- Creed
- Religion
- National origin
- Sex¹ (includes pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions)
- Marital status
- Familial status
- Receipt of public assistance
- Membership or activity in a local human rights commission
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- For employees, genetic information

Age: The prohibition against harassment and discrimination based on age prohibits such conduct based on a person's age if the person is over the age of 18.

Disability: A physical, sensory, or mental impairment which materially limits one or more major life activities; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment; or an impairment that is episodic or in remission and would materially limit a major life activity when active.

Familial status: The condition of one or more minors having legal status or custody with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s), or the designee of the parent(s) or guardian(s) with the written permission of the parent(s) or guardian(s). This also protects those who are pregnant or those who are in the process of securing legal custody of a minor from being harassed or discriminated against on that basis. Familial status also means residing with and caring for one or more individuals who lack the ability to meet essential requirements for physical health, safety, or self-care because the individual or individuals are unable to receive and evaluate information or make or communicate decisions.

Genetic information: Includes information about an individual's or their family members' genetic tests, family medical history, an individual's request for, or receipt of, genetic services, or the participation in clinical research that includes genetic services by the individual or their family member, and the genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or a pregnant family member, and the genetic information of any embryo legally held by the individual or their family member using an assisted reproductive technology.

Marital status: Whether a person is single, married, remarried, divorced, separated, or a surviving spouse, and includes protection against harassment and discrimination on the basis of the identity, situation, actions, or beliefs of a spouse or former spouse.

¹ Refer to [HR/LR Policy #1329](#), Sexual Harassment Prohibited, for specific information on harassment based on unwelcome conduct or communication of a sexual nature.

Membership or activity in a local human rights commission: Participation in an agency of a city, county, or group of counties that has the purpose of dealing with discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or familial status, as defined by [M.S. 363A.03](#), subd. 23.

Protected class harassment or harassment based on protected class.

Unwelcome conduct or communication that is based on actual or perceived membership in one or more protected classes, including stereotypes of one or more protected classes, that has a negative effect or is likely to have a negative effect on the complainant and/or on the workplace or public service environment.

Public service environment

A location where public service is being provided.

Third party

Individuals who are not state agency employees, but who have business interactions with state agency employees, including, but not limited to:

- Applicants for state employment
- Vendors
- Contractors
- Volunteers
- Customers
- Business partners
- Unpaid interns
- Other individuals with whom state agency employees interact in the course of employees' work for the state, such as advocates, lobbyists, and representatives of individuals or entities with business with any branch of Minnesota state government.

Statutory References

[42 U.S.C. 2000e](#), et al. Equal Employment Opportunities

[M.S. Ch. 43A](#) State Personnel Management

[M.S. Ch. 363A](#) Human Rights

GENERAL STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

I. Prohibition of Protected Class Harassment and Discrimination

Harassment of or discrimination against any employee or third party based on protected class in the workplace or public service environment, or which affects the workplace or public service environment, is strictly prohibited. Harassment of or discrimination against an individual because of their relationship or association with members of a protected class is also strictly prohibited.

Protected class harassment and discrimination may take different forms including verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct or communication. Conduct based on protected class may violate this policy even if it is not intended to be harassing. Protected class harassment and discrimination under this policy includes, but is not limited to, the following behavior when it is based on actual or perceived membership in a protected class, including stereotypes of protected classes:

- Offensive jokes, slurs, derogatory remarks, epithets, name-calling, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs.
- Display or use of offensive objects, drawings, pictures, or gestures.
- Physical assaults or threats.
- Unwelcome touching or comments about a person's hair, body, clothing, or personal effects related to the person's protected class.
- Repeatedly or deliberately misgendering a person, including using gendered personal references that do not align with another person's identity.
- Repeatedly or deliberately mispronouncing a person's name, related to the person's protected class, including use of an unwelcome nickname, or shortening a name without permission.
- Repeated or deliberate comments, behavior, or other interactions that communicate hostility or bias toward a person who might identify as being a member of a protected class.
- Following, stalking, intimidation.
- Malicious interference with work performance.
- Implicit or explicit preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment for submitting to the conduct or communication.
- Implicit or explicit negative treatment or threats of negative treatment for refusing to submit to the conduct or communication.
- Discriminatory conduct based on an individual's actual or perceived protected class that segregates, separates, limits or restricts the individual from employment opportunities, including, but not limited to, hiring, promotion, compensation, disciplinary action, assignment of job duties, benefits or privileges of employment.

II. Employee and Third-Party Responsibilities and Complaint Procedure

Harassment and discrimination based on protected class will not be tolerated. All employees and third parties are expected to comply with this policy.

Employees and third parties are strongly encouraged to report all incidents of protected class harassment and discrimination, whether the individual is the recipient of the behavior, an observer, or is otherwise aware of the behavior. Individuals are encouraged to report incidents as soon as possible after the incident occurs. Individuals may report incidents to:

- Any of the agency's managers or supervisors.

- The agency's affirmative action officer.
- The agency's human resources office.
- Agency management, up to and including the agency head.

If the report concerns an agency head, the complainant may contact Minnesota Management and Budget's (MMB's) Deputy Commissioner of Enterprise Employee Resources.

To ensure the prompt and thorough investigation of a report, the complainant may be asked to provide information in writing, which may include, but is not limited to:

- The name, department, and position of the person(s) allegedly causing the harassment or discrimination.
- A description of the incident(s), including the date(s), location(s), and the identity of any witnesses.
- The name(s) of other individuals who may have been subject to similar harassment or discrimination.
- What, if any, steps have been taken to stop the harassment or discrimination.
- Any other information the complainant believes to be relevant.

Individuals are encouraged to use the agency's internal complaint procedure but may also choose to file a complaint externally with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR), or other legal channels.

III. Manager/Supervisor Responsibility

Managers and supervisors must:

- Model appropriate behavior.
- Treat all reports of protected class harassment and discrimination seriously.
- Appropriately respond to a report or problem when they receive a report of protected class harassment or discrimination, or when they are otherwise aware a problem exists.
- Immediately report all allegations or incidents of protected class harassment or discrimination to human resources or the agency Affirmative Action Officer.
- Comply with their agency's complaint and investigation procedures and/or the agency's Affirmative Action Plan.

Managers and supervisors who knowingly participate in, allow, or tolerate harassment, discrimination, or retaliation are in violation of this policy and are subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

IV. Human Resources Responsibilities

Agency human resources must:

- Model appropriate behavior.
- Distribute the Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited Policy to all employees, through a method whereby receipt can be verified.
- Treat all reports of protected class harassment and discrimination seriously.
- Comply with the agency's complaint and investigation procedures and/or the agency's Affirmative Action Plan.

V. Affirmative Action Officer or Designee Responsibilities

Agency Affirmative Action Officer/designee must:

- Model appropriate behavior.
- Treat all reports of protected class harassment and discrimination seriously.
- Comply with the agency's complaint and investigation procedures and/or the agency's Affirmative Action Plan.
- Keep the agency apprised of changes and developments in the law and policy.

VI. Investigation and Discipline

State agencies will take seriously all reports of protected class harassment, discrimination and retaliation, and will take prompt and appropriate action. When conducting an investigation, managers and supervisors, human resources, and Affirmative Action Officers must follow their agency's investigation procedures.

State agencies will take prompt and appropriate corrective action when there is a violation of this policy.

Employees who are found to have engaged in conduct in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

Third parties who are found to have engaged in conduct in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate action. Appropriate action for policy violations by third parties will depend on the facts and circumstances, including the relationship between the third party and the agency. Agencies may contact MMB's Enterprise Director of Human Resource Management for assistance in determining appropriate action for third parties. MMB may refer agencies to the appropriate resources, which may include, for example, the Department of Administration with respect to policy violations by vendors or contractors.

Employees who knowingly file a false report of protected class harassment, discrimination, or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

VII. Non-Retaliation

Retaliation against any person who opposes protected class harassment or discrimination, who reports protected class harassment or discrimination, or who participates in an investigation of such reports, is strictly prohibited. Retaliation also includes conduct or communication designed to prevent a person from opposing or reporting protected class harassment or discrimination or participating in an investigation. Retaliation will not be tolerated. Any employee who is found to have engaged in retaliation in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge. Third parties who are found to have engaged in retaliation in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate action.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Agencies are responsible for:

- Adopting this policy as the agency HR policy.
- Disseminating this policy to agency employees through a method whereby receipt can be verified.
- Posting this policy in a manner that can be accessed by all employees and third parties.
- Including this policy in their Affirmative Action Plan.
- Implementing this policy, which includes:
 - Implementing an educational program
 - Developing and implementing a procedure for reporting complaints
 - Communicating the complaint procedure to employees
 - Developing and implementing a procedure under which reports will be addressed promptly.
- Enforcing this policy.
- Reporting annually dispositions of reports of protected class harassment or discrimination using the Affirmative Action Report.

MMB is responsible for:

- Ensuring that state agencies carry out their responsibilities under this policy, developing training, and updating this policy as necessary.

REFERENCES, FORMS, AND SUPPLEMENTS

Refer to [HR/LR Policy #1329](#) Sexual Harassment Prohibited for issues related to sexual harassment. For issues not related to sexual harassment, or harassment or discrimination based on protected class under this policy, refer to [HR/LR Policy #1432](#) Respectful Workplace.

Employees may consult their agency's Affirmative Action Plan for agency-specific information.

Complaint Form

Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited and Sexual Harassment Prohibited Policies [Complaint Form](#)

Acknowledgement Form

The below form may be used to verify receipt by agency employees.

I acknowledge that I have received and read the policy, [HR/LR Policy #1436](#) Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited, including the policy's complaint procedure.

I understand that harassment and discrimination based on one or more protected classes, and retaliation, are strictly prohibited. I understand that if I engage in conduct in violation of the policy toward any state agency employee, or any "third party" as defined by the policy, I will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

I understand that if I believe that I have been subjected to harassing, discriminatory or retaliatory conduct as defined by the policy by any state agency employee, or by any "third party" as defined by the policy, I am encouraged to report that behavior. I understand that I can make a report to any of my agency's managers or supervisors, the agency's affirmative action officer, the agency's human resources office, or agency management, up to and including the agency head. I understand that if my report concerns an agency head, I may contact Minnesota Management and Budget.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print Employee Name: _____

CONTACTS

MMB Enterprise Employee Resources

Any appropriate authority as set forth in this policy.