



Workplace Harassment Policy

Policy

Forsyth County Government strives to provide an environment where all employees are free to perform their job duties with respect and dignity. Therefore, Forsyth County will not tolerate or condone workplace harassment on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, age, color, or disability in any department by co-workers, supervisors, or non-employees who conduct business with the County. Retaliation or interference, coercion, restraint or reprisal against any person complaining of, or participating in an investigation of, alleged harassment is also prohibited. The County has established a training program for all employees as a part of its prevention plan.

Scope

This policy is applicable to all County employees except the Sheriff's department which is subject to an internal procedure set forth in its "Standard Operating Policy 234."

Definitions

Workplace Harassment is defined as unwelcome speech or conduct based upon race, sex, gender, religion, national origin, age, color, or disability or other protected status that creates a hostile work environment or constitutes quid pro quo harassment.

Hostile Work Environment is defined as unwelcome speech or conduct that unreasonably interferes with job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Whether a hostile work environment exists may depend upon, among other things, the following factors: (i) whether the harassment was verbal or physical or both; (ii) how frequently the harassment was repeated; (iii) how hostile and clearly offensive; (iv) the identity of the harasser (coworker or supervisor); (v) whether other people joined in the harassment; and (vi) whether the harassment was aimed at more than one person.

Quid Pro Quo harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct when:

- (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or
- (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual.

Retaliation is defined as adverse treatment of an employee that occurs as a result of a report of, investigation of a report of, or opposition to workplace harassment.

Complaint Procedure

- (1) Any employee who believes he or she may have a complaint of workplace harassment must immediately file a complaint with the employee's immediate supervisor, the Human Resources Director ("HR Director"), or the County Manager only if the complaint is against the HR Director.

- (2) It is the employee's responsibility to complain in writing or to request an individual interview and be prepared to provide as much specific information as possible. Supervisors on notice of, or any employee who witnesses workplace harassment should also report the prohibited conduct to their supervisor or the HR Director.

Investigations

The confidentiality and privacy of County employees and others involved will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances.

The parties and appropriate management officials will be advised of the outcome of investigations. Any employee found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary procedures up to and including dismissal.

Working very closely with department heads and other County administrators, the HR Director is responsible for managing all complaints of workplace harassment and for ensuring that complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially.