

# **Prevention of Workplace Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policy**

*Adopted: December 12, 2019*

*Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD)* is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, MCEDD expects that all relationships among persons will be respectful and professional, free of bias, prejudice and harassment in the workplace, at work related events, or any activity coordinated by or through the organization. This policy applies to all employees, elected officials, board or commission members, volunteers, interns and any other person MCEDD interacts with in the course of accomplishing the work of the organization.

MCEDD has developed this policy to ensure that all its employees can work in an environment free from unlawful harassment, discrimination and retaliation. MCEDD will make every reasonable effort to ensure that all concerned are familiar with these policies and are aware that any complaint in violation of these policies will be investigated and resolved appropriately.

Discrimination, harassment and retaliation are not acceptable.

Any employee who has questions or concerns about these policies should talk with the Finance and Operations Manager or the Executive Director.

## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

MCEDD is an equal employment opportunity employer. The District employs, retains, promotes, terminates and otherwise treats all employees and job applicants on the basis of merit, qualifications, and competence. This policy shall be applied without regard to any individual's age, color, gender, marital status, medical condition, military status, national origin, pregnancy, physical handicap or disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or any characteristic protected by law.

## **RETALIATION**

MCEDD encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of MCEDD to promptly and thoroughly investigate such reports. MCEDD prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or participates in an investigation of such reports.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal and state laws. For the purposes of this policy, "sexual harassment" is defined, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example: a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably

interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 recognizes two types of sexual harassment: a) quid pro quo and b) hostile work environment. Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

Oregon Law provides further protection from sexual assault defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that is inflicted upon a person or compelled through the use of physical force, manipulation, threat, or intimidation.

## **HARASSMENT**

Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal, written or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law, or that of his or her relatives, friends or associates, and that: a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes labels, insults or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; demeaning jokes; and written or graphic material that belittles or shows hostility or dislike toward an individual or group that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace, on company time or using company equipment by e-mail, phone (including voice messages), text messages, social networking sites or other means.

## **REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION OR RETALIATION**

MCEDD encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment or retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe that they have been the victim of such conduct should discuss their concerns with the Executive Director or the Board Chair. See the complaint procedure described below.

In addition, MCEDD encourages individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct to promptly advise the offender that their behavior is unwelcome and to request that it stop. Often this action alone will resolve the problem. MCEDD recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through complaint procedures.

Following receipt of a complaint or concern management will follow-up every three months for one year to ensure no further concerns or retaliation are experienced. Employees should not wait for the management follow-up to share related experiences. If an employee would like the follow-up to discontinue the follow-up process a request must be submitted in writing to the *Finance and Operations Director*

### **INTERNAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy or believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with Executive Director. In the event the complaint involves the Executive Director, the individual should discuss with the Board Chair. MCEDD encourages employees to document the event(s), associated date(s), and potential witnesses.

MCEDD encourages the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that quick and helpful action can be taken before relationships become irreparably broken. Early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment. However, complaints and concerns may be brought forward within four years of the alleged violation. MCEDD encourages employees to document the events, associated dates, and potential witnesses.

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated quickly. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the event(s) or may have other relevant knowledge.

MCEDD will maintain confidentiality throughout the investigatory process to the extent possible with acceptable investigation and appropriate corrective action.

Misconduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with appropriately. Responsive action may include, for example, training, referral to counseling or corrective action such as [Identify potential options: warning, reprimand, withholding of a promotion or pay increase, reassignment, temporary suspension without pay, or termination] as MCEDD believes appropriate under the circumstances.

False and malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination or retaliation (as opposed to complaints that, even if erroneous, are made in good faith) may be the subject of appropriate disciplinary action.

### **EXTERNAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

MCEDD encourages employees to bring their concerns and complaints to the organization, and understand that, at times, this may not be the choice of the employee. Below is a list of the external complaint options. Please reach out to the preferred choice to determine the appropriate timelines for their processes.

- Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries at the following web address:  
[https://www.oregon.gov/boli/CRD/Pages/C\\_Crcompl.aspx](https://www.oregon.gov/boli/CRD/Pages/C_Crcompl.aspx)
- Civil or Criminal Action. In these circumstances, a Notice of Claim must be provided to us in accordance with ORS 30.275.

### **EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS**

No employee will be required or invited to sign an agreement requiring the non-disclosure of information related to discrimination or sexual assault as a condition of employment, continued employment, promotion, compensation or the receipt of benefits. An employee may request this type of agreement and, upon request, will be provided at least seven (7) days to change their mind.

### **ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEE SUPPORT SERVICES**

Employees may choose to use other support services throughout and following instances related to concerns and complaints. The organization provides the following for additional assistance: Employee Assistance Services. Contact the Finance and Operations Director for detail on the current service provider.