

# **Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office**

## **Policy and Procedures Regarding Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

### **The Policy Statement**

The Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office is committed to providing a safe environment for all its employees, free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. The Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office will treat all sexual harassment incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment in the workplace. Any person found to have sexually harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment. All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimized for making such a complaint.

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. The Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office recognizes that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

The Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office recognizes that sexual harassment often occurs within unequal relationships in the workplace, for example between manager or supervisor and employee. Anyone, including employees of the Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office, clients, customers, casual workers, contractors or visitors who sexually harasses another will be reprimanded in accordance with this internal policy.

All sexual harassment is prohibited whether it takes place within the Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office premises or outside, including at social events, business trips, training sessions or conferences involving the Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office.

### **Definition of Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is the unwelcomed conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a

person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behavior which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

### **Physical conduct**

- Unwelcomed physical contact including pinching, stroking, kissing, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g. touching, pinching
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors

### **Verbal conduct**

- Sexually oriented comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)

### **Non-verbal conduct**

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually-suggestive gestures

## **Complaints Procedures**

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. Because the Terrebonne Parish Assessor's office recognizes that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e. between a supervisor and his/her employee) and that it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser.

If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser, he/she can approach one of the designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment, hereby designated as the Chief Deputy Assessor.

When a designated person receives a complaint of sexual harassment, he/she will:

- Immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s)
- Ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome he/she would desire
- Ensure that the victim understands the Assessor's Office's procedures for dealing with the complaint
- Discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the victim from pursuing a formal complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome
- Keep a confidential record of all discussions
- Respect the choice of the victim
- Ensure that the victim knows that he/she can lodge the complaint outside of the Assessor's Office through the relevant country/legal framework

### **Informal complaints mechanism**

If the victim wishes to deal with the matter informally, the designated person will:

- Give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint
- Ensure that the alleged harasser understands the complaints mechanism
- Facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant, or refer the matter to a designated mediator within the Assessor's Office to resolve the matter
- Ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens
- Follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behavior has stopped
- Ensure that the above is done in a timely manner, and within ten (10) business days of the complaint being made

### **Formal complaints mechanism**

If the victim wants to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint mechanism has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the victim, the formal complaint mechanism should be used to resolve the matter. The designated person who initially received the complaint will then conduct a formal investigation, whereby said designated person will:

- Interview the victim and the alleged harasser separately
- Interview other relevant third parties separately

- Decide whether or not the incident(s) of sexual harassment took place
- Produce a report detailing the investigations, findings and any recommendations
- If the harassment took place, decide what the appropriate remedy for the victim is, in consultation with the victim (e.g. an apology, a change to working arrangements, a promotion if the victim was demoted as a result of the harassment, training for the harasser, discipline, suspension, dismissal)
- Follow up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, that the behavior has stopped and that the victim is satisfied with the outcome
- If it cannot determine that the harassment took place, he/she may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the workplace
- Keep a record of all actions taken
- Ensure that the all records concerning the matter are kept confidential
- Ensure that the process is done as quickly as possible and in any event within ten (10) business days of the complaint being made

### **Sanctions and disciplinary measures**

Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy may be subject to any of the following sanctions:

- Verbal or written warning
- Adverse performance evaluation
- Reduction in wages
- Demotion
- Suspension
- Dismissal

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of sexual harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate dismissal of the harasser.

### **Implementation of this policy**

The Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office will ensure that this policy is widely disseminated to all relevant persons. It will be included in the staff handbook. All new employees must be apprised of the content of this policy

as part of their induction into the Terrebonne Parish Assessor's Office.

Supervisors, managers and those responsible for dealing with sexual harassment cases will report on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done on a yearly basis. As a result of this report, the Assessor's Office will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.

### **Preventing sexual harassment training**

As per RS 42:343 each employee shall be required to complete 1 hour of education and each agency head shall complete 2 hours of education for each calendar year.

The Chief Deputy will maintain the documentation to show the completion of education for each employee.

